TYPICAL PLAYS
FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE

edited by

JAMES PLAISTED WEBBER AND HANSON HART WEBSTER

THE REHEARSAL, by Maurice Baring, A MISTAKE AT THE MANOR, by Maude Morrison Frank, THE PRINCE OF COURT PAINTERS, by Constance D'Arcy Mackay, FRANCES AND FRANCIS, by James Plaisted Webber, AUGUSTUS IN SEARCH OF A FATHER, by Harold Chapin, PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER, by August von Kotzebue, THE THRICE PROMISED BRIDE, by Cheng-Chin Hsuing, THE COPPER POT, by Frances Healey, SWEETHEARTS, by William Schwenk Gilbert, THE GIBSON UPRIGHT, by Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson, and THE DRAGON, by Lady Gregory.

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Selected by

JAMES PLAISTED WEBBER
and
HANSON HART WEBSTER

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TYPICAL PLAYS

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For Young People

SELECTED AND EDITED BY

JAMES PLAISTED WEBBER

AND

HANSON HART WEBSTER

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1930

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The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

FOREWORD

THIS is a book of plays for boys and girls from fifteen to eighteen years of age. It differs from our two previously published collections in that it contains both one-act plays and longer plays. It resembles our earlier books in that each play included may be easily staged and acted by amateurs. There are a few lines of comment on each play and its author, which should help producers and participants.

The plays are of varied types. Some of the one-act plays have a background of literature or of art; one of these is written in verse; another shows the method of an eighteenth-century playwright, with which may be compared the methods of several contemporary writers. In two others of the short plays there is an exotic flavor — a Chinese legend dramatized in the Chinese manner in one, and a Turkish legend presented in two scenes in the other. Of the longer plays, *Sweethearts* represents a distinguished dramatist of the Victorian school; being in two acts, it is a bit unusual in form. *The Gibson Upright*, a drama of contemporary American business life, is as striking a contrast as can be imagined to the fantastic Irish comedy, *The Dragon*.

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JAMES PLAISTED WEBBER
HANSON HART WEBSTER

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TYPICAL PLAYS

THE REHEARSAL[1]

By MAURICE BARING

CHARACTERS

Mr. William Shakespeare
The Producer
The Stage Manager

Mr. Burbage (Macbeth)
Mr. Hughes (Lady Macbeth)
Mr. Kydd (Banquo)
Mr. Foote (Macduff)
Mr. Thomas (The Doctor)
Mr. Lyle (First Witch)
Second Witch
Third Witch

Scene: *The Globe Theatre, 1595. On the stage the Author, the Producer, and the Stage Manager are standing. A rehearsal of "Macbeth" is about to begin. Waiting in the wings are the actors who are playing the Witches, Banquo, Macduff, etc. They are all men.*

THE STAGE MANAGER. We'd better begin with the last act.

THE PRODUCER. I think we'll begin with the first act. We've never done it all through yet.

[1] From *Diminutive Dramas*, by Maurice Baring. Reprinted by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, to whom applications for permission for stage production should be addressed.

THE STAGE MANAGER. Mr. Colman isn't here. It's no good doing the first act without Duncan.

THE PRODUCER. Where is Mr. Colman? Did you let him know about rehearsal?

THE STAGE MANAGER. I sent a messenger to his house in Gray's Inn.

THE FIRST WITCH. Mr. Colman is playing Psyche in a masque at Kenilworth. He won't be back until the day after to-morrow.

THE PRODUCER. That settles it. We'll begin with the fifth act.

THE FIRST WITCH. Then I suppose I can go.

THE SECOND WITCH. } And I suppose ——
THE THIRD WITCH. } We needn't wait.

THE STAGE MANAGER. Certainly not. We're going on to the fourth act as soon as we've done the fifth.

BANQUO. But I suppose you don't want me?

THE STAGE MANAGER. And what about your ghost entrance in Act IV? We must get the "business" right this time; besides, we'll do the second act if we've time. Now, Act V, Mr. Thomas and Mr. Bowles, please.

THE FIRST WITCH. Mr. Bowles can't come to-day. He told me to tell you. He's having a tooth pulled out.

THE STAGE MANAGER. Then will you read the waiting gentlewoman's part, Mr. Lyle? You can take this scrip. [*The First Witch takes the scrip.*] Where is Mr. Thomas?

THE FIRST WITCH. He said he was coming.

THE STAGE MANAGER. We can't wait. I'll read his part. We'll leave out the beginning and just give Mr. Hughes his cue.

THE FIRST WITCH [*reading*]. "Having no witness to confirm my speech."

THE STAGE MANAGER. Mr. Hughes.

THE FIRST WITCH. He was here a moment ago.

THE STAGE MANAGER [*louder*]. Mr. Hughes.

[*Enter Lady Macbeth — Mr. Hughes, a young man of about twenty-four.*]

LADY MACBETH. Sorry. [*He comes on down some steps* L.C.]

THE PRODUCER. That will never do, Mr. Hughes; there's no necessity to sway as if you were intoxicated; and you mustn't look at your feet.

LADY MACBETH. It's the steps. They're so rickety.

THE PRODUCER. We'll begin again from "speech." [*Lady Macbeth comes on again. He looks straight in front of him and falls heavily to the ground.*] I said those steps were to be mended yesterday.

[*The First Witch is convulsed with laughter.*]

LADY MACBETH. There's nothing to laugh at.

THE PRODUCER. Are you hurt, Mr. Hughes?

LADY MACBETH. Not much.

[*The steps are replaced by two supers.*]

THE PRODUCER. Now from "speech."

[*Mr. Hughes comes on again.*]

THE PRODUCER. You must not hold the taper upside down.

LADY MACBETH. How can I rub my hands and hold a taper too? What's the use of the taper?

THE PRODUCER. You can rub the back of your hand. You needn't wash your hands in the air, either. That's better.

[*Enter the Doctor — Mr. Thomas. He waits* R.]

GENTLEWOMAN. "Neither to you nor any one; having no witness to confirm my speech. [*Enter Lady Macbeth, with a taper.*] Lo you, here she comes!"

GENTLEWOMAN. "This is her very guise; and, upon my life, fast asleep. Observe her; stand close."

DOCTOR. "How came she by that light?"

GENTLEWOMAN. "Why, it stood by her; she has light by her continually; 'tis her command."

DOCTOR. "You see, her eyes are open."

GENTLEWOMAN. "Ay, but their sense are shut."

DOCTOR. "What is it she does now? Look, how she rubs her hands."

GENTLEWOMAN. "It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands: I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour."

LADY MACBETH. "Here's a damned spot."

THE STAGE MANAGER. No, no, Mr. Hughes, "Yet here's a spot."

THE PRODUCER. Begin again from "hands."

GENTLEWOMAN. "It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands. I've known her to continue in this three-quarters of an hour."

LADY MACBETH. "Yet here's a damned spot."

THE STAGE MANAGER. It's not "damned" at all. That comes later.

LADY MACBETH. It's catchy. Couldn't I say "mark" instead of "spot" in the first line?

THE DOCTOR [*coming forward*]. That would entirely spoil the effect of my "Hark!" You see, "mark" rhymes with "Hark." It's impossible.

THE PRODUCER. Oh! It's you, Mr. Thomas. Will you go straight on. We'll do the whole scene over presently. Now from "hour."

LADY MACBETH. "Yes, here's a spot."

THE STAGE MANAGER. It's not "Yes," but "Yet," Mr. Hughes.

LADY MACBETH. "Yet here's a spot."

THE DOCTOR [*at the top of his voice*]. "Hark!"

THE PRODUCER. Not so loud, Mr. Thomas; that would wake her up.

THE DOCTOR [*in a high falsetto*]. "Har-r-rk! She spe-e-e-aks. I will . . . set . . . down."

THE PRODUCER. You needn't bleat that "speaks," Mr. Thomas, and the second part of that line is cut.

THE DOCTOR. It's not cut in my part; "Hark! she speaks."

LADY MACBETH. "Yet here's a spot."

THE STAGE MANAGER. No, Mr. Hughes! "Out damned spot."

LADY MACBETH. Sorry.

THE PRODUCER. We must get that right. Now from "hour."

LADY MACBETH. "Yet here's a spot."

THE DOCTOR. "Hark! she speaks."

LADY MACBETH. "Get out, damned spot. Get out, I say! One, two, three, four: why, there's plenty of time to do't. Oh! Hell! Fie, fie, my Lord! a soldier and a beard! What have we got to fear when none can call our murky power to swift account withal? You'd never have thought the old man had so much blood in him!"

THE AUTHOR. I don't think you've got those lines quite right yet, Mr. Hughes.

LADY MACBETH. What's wrong?

THE STAGE MANAGER. There's no "get." It's "one, two": and not "one, two, three, four." Then, it's "Hell is murky." And there's no "plenty." And it's "a soldier and *afeared*," and not "a soldier and a *beard*."

THE AUTHOR. And after that you made two lines into rhymed verse.

MR. HUGHES. Yes, I know I did. I thought it wanted it.

THE PRODUCER. Please try to speak your lines as they are written, Mr. Hughes.

[*Enter Mr. Burbage, who plays Macbeth.*]

MR. BURBAGE. That scene doesn't go. Now, don't you think Macbeth had better walk in his sleep instead of Lady Macbeth?

THE STAGE MANAGER. That's an idea.

THE PRODUCER. I think the whole scene might be cut. It's quite unnecessary.

LADY MACBETH. Then I shan't come on in the whole of the fifth act. If that scene's cut I sha'n't play at all.

THE STAGE MANAGER. We're thinking of transferring the scene to Macbeth. [*To the Author.*] It wouldn't need

much altering. Would you mind rewriting that scene, Mr. Shakespeare? It wouldn't want much alteration. You'd have to change that line about Arabia. Instead of "this little hand," you might say: "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this horny hand." I'm not sure it isn't more effective.

THE AUTHOR. I'm afraid it might get a laugh.

MR. BURBAGE. Not if I play it.

THE AUTHOR. I think it's more likely that Lady Macbeth would walk in her sleep, but ——

MR. BURBAGE. That doesn't signify. I can make a great hit in that scene.

LADY MACBETH. If you take that scene from me, I shan't play Juliet to-night.

THE STAGE MANAGER [*aside to Producer*]. We can't possibly get another Juliet.

THE PRODUCER. On the whole, I think we must leave the scene as it is.

MR. BURBAGE. I've got nothing to do in the last act. What's the use of my coming to rehearsal when there's nothing for me to rehearse?

THE PRODUCER. Very well, Mr. Burbage. We'll go on to the Third Scene at once. We'll go through your scene again later, Mr. Hughes.

MR. BURBAGE. Before we do this scene there's a point I wish to settle. In Scene V, when Seyton tells me the Queen's dead, I say: "She should have died hereafter; there would have been a time for such a word"; and then the messenger enters. I should like a soliloquy here, about twenty or thirty lines, if possible in rhyme, in any case ending with a tag. I should like it to be about Lady Macbeth. Macbeth might have something touching to say about their happy domestic life, and the early days of their marriage. He might refer to their courtship. I must have something to make Macbeth sympathetic, otherwise the public won't stand it. He might say his better-half had left him, and

then he might refer to her beauty. The speech might begin:

"O dearest chuck, it is unkind indeed
To leave me in the midst of my sore need."

Or something of the kind. In any case, it ought to rhyme. Could I have that written at once, and then we could rehearse it?

THE PRODUCER. Certainly, certainly, Mr. Burbage. Will you write it yourself, Mr. Shakespeare, or shall we get some one else to do it?

THE AUTHOR. I'll do it myself if some one will read my part.

THE PRODUCER. Let me see; I forget what is your part.

THE STAGE MANAGER. Mr. Shakespeare is playing Seyton. [*Aside.*] We cast him for Duncan, but he wasn't up to it.

THE PRODUCER. Mr. Kydd, will you read Mr. Shakespeare's part?

BANQUO. Certainly.

THE PRODUCER. Please let us have that speech, Mr. Shakespeare, as quickly as possible. [*Aside.*] Don't make it too long. Ten lines at the most.

THE AUTHOR [*aside*]. Is it absolutely necessary that it should rhyme?

THE PRODUCER [*aside*]. No, of course not; that's Burbage's fad. [*Exit the Author into the wings.*]

MR. BURBAGE. I should like to go through the first fight.

THE PRODUCER. Very well, Mr. Burbage.

THE STAGE MANAGER. Macduff — Mr. Foote ——

MACDUFF. I'm here.

MR. BURBAGE. I'll give you the cue:

"Why should I play the fool and like a Roman
Die on my sword; while there is life, there's hope;
The gashes are for them."

MACDUFF. "Turn, hell-hound, turn."

MR. BURBAGE. I don't think Macduff ought to call Macbeth a hell-hound.

THE PRODUCER. What do you suggest?

MR. BURBAGE. I should suggest: "False Monarch, turn." It's more dignified.

MACDUFF. I would rather say "hell-hound."

THE PRODUCER. Supposing we made it "King of Hell"?

MR. BURBAGE. I don't think that would do.

THE PRODUCER. Then we must leave it for the present.

MACDUFF. "Turn, hell-hound, turn."

[*They begin to fight with wooden swords.*]

THE STAGE MANAGER. You don't begin to fight till Macduff says, "Give thee out."

MR. BURBAGE. I think we might run those two speeches into one, and I might say:

"Of all men, I would avoided thee;
But come on now. Although my soul is charged
With blood of thine, I'll have no further words.
My voice is in my sword."

Then Macduff could say:

"O bloodier villain than terms can well express."

THE PRODUCER. We must consult the author about that.

MR. BURBAGE. We'll do the fencing without words first.

[*They begin to fight again. Macduff gives Mr. Burbage a tremendous blow on the shoulder.*]

MR. BURBAGE. Oh! oh! That's my rheumatic shoulder. Please be a little more careful, Mr. Foote. You know I've got no padding. I can't go on rehearsing now. I am very seriously hurt indeed.

MACDUFF. I'm sure I'm very sorry. It was entirely an accident.

MR. BURBAGE. I'm afraid I must go home. I don't feel up to it.

THE STAGE MANAGER. I'll send for some ointment. Please be more careful, Mr. Foote. Couldn't you possibly see your way to take Scene III, Mr. Burbage?

MR. BURBAGE. I know Scene III backwards. However, I'll just run through my speech.

THE STAGE MANAGER. What? "This push will cheer me ever"?

MR. BURBAGE [*peevishly*]. No, not that one. You know that's all right. That tricky speech about medicine. Give me the cue.

THE STAGE MANAGER. "That keep her from her rest."

MR. BURBAGE. "Cure her of that:

Canst thou not minister to a sickly mind,
Pull from the memory a booted sorrow,
Rub out the troubles of the busy brain,
And with a sweet and soothing antidote
Clean the stiff bosom of that dangerous poison
Which weighs upon the heart?"

There, you see, word-perfect. What did I say?

THE STAGE MANAGER. Yes, yes, Mr. Burbage. Here's Mr. Shakespeare.

THE AUTHOR. I've written that speech. Shall I read it?

THE PRODUCER. Please.

MR. SHAKESPEARE [*reads*]. "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle,
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage;
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

MR. BURBAGE. Well, you don't expect me to say *that*, I suppose. It's a third too short. There's not a single rhyme in it. It's got nothing to do with the situation, and it's an insult to the stage. "Struts and frets" indeed! I see there's nothing left for me but to throw up the part. You can get any one you please to play Macbeth. One thing is quite certain, I won't.

[*Exit Mr. Burbage in a passion.*]

THE STAGE MANAGER [*to the Author*]. Now you've done it.

THE AUTHOR [*to the Producer*]. You said it needn't rhyme.

THE PRODUCER. It's Macduff. It was all your fault, Mr. Foote.

LADY MACBETH. Am I to wear a fair wig or a dark wig?

THE PRODUCER. Oh! I don't know.

THE AUTHOR. Dark, if you please. People are always saying I'm making portraits. So, if you're dark, nobody can say I meant the character for the Queen or for Mistress Mary Fytton.

THE STAGE MANAGER. It's no good going on now. It's all up — it's all up.

CURTAIN

A MISTAKE AT THE MANOR [1]

By MAUDE MORRISON FRANK

CHARACTERS

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON, *a country gentleman.*
MRS. FEATHERSTON, *his wife.*
GRADY, *a butler.*
MOLLY, *a maid.*
CORNELIUS KELLY, *a groom.*
OLIVER GOLDSMITH, *aged* 15.

Time: 1743

SCENE: *The dining-hall at Featherston Manor. In the center of the hall is a table set for three. To the left is another table on which are various pieces of silver. Grady is vigorously polishing the silver as Kelly enters from the right. Kelly wears high boots, and carries his hat, in which is fastened a cockade of white ribbon.*

GRADY. Is it yourself, then, Corney Kelly, coming around so early? And what might be the matter with the stables, that you're after quitting them at this time of the day?

KELLY. Sure, I just stepped over to wish you the top o' the morning, and to ask how the world was treating you all here.

GRADY [*angrily*]. How the world is treating me, is it? 'Tis not a good time to ask me that, then. There's a scrap of the world that's treating me as bad as possible this

[1] From *Short Plays About Famous People*, by Maude Morrison Frank. Copyright, 1915, by Henry Holt and Company, One Park Avenue, New York City, to whom application to produce this play must be made. It is here reprinted for class use only by arrangement with these publishers.

very minute. Hot cakes, indeed! *I'd* hot him, if I had the chance. "And don't go wool-gathering and forget to put the plates in the platewarmer, old cock," he says to me — me, that's waited on Squire Featherston and all his friends for four and twenty year!

KELLY. Who's this you're distressing yourself about?

GRADY. 'Tis a young sprig that dropped in here last night to visit the master, and is like to drive us all distracted with his impudent ways. "Don't you be after filling your pockets more than half full up with his oats," he says to Tim O'Rourke, when he gives him his horse to feed. Tim was that angry when he came in and told us in the servants' hall about it that we could hardly keep him from going back and putting up his fists at him. And Molly ——

KELLY [*interrupting*]. Molly! What did he have to be after saying anything at all to Molly for?

GRADY [*laughing*]. Ah, there, now; there's no need to be troubling yourself about anything he might say to Molly, even though 'tis her bachelor you'd like to be. 'Tis only a youngster that he is, though a more forward, swaggering jackanapes I never set eyes on. [*Enter Molly.*] Here's Molly herself now. Do you ask her if I'm not in the right about him.

MOLLY. I've a message for you, Mr. Grady. [*Seeing Kelly.*] A pleasant good-morning to you, Mr. Kelly.

KELLY. Sure, 'tis always a pleasant morning when I see you, Molly.

GRADY [*to Molly*]. Have you forgotten my message entirely?

MOLLY. 'Tis from the young gentleman in the guest-chamber. He called out to me, that you were to look sharp with his breakfast, and not forget the cake, for he'd be down directly.

GRADY. Did any one ever hear the like of that, now? I wonder did he have no more orders to give?

[*Bell rings violently.*]

MOLLY. There's his bell now. I'll run up and see what he'll be needing, or he'll be after breaking the bell-pull.

[*Exit Molly.*]

GRADY. Perhaps his boots weren't blacked to his liking, and he'd be wanting the master to do them for him, or maybe he'd wish the mistress to mend the tear in his ruffles.

[*Reënter Molly, laughing.*]

GRADY. And what was his will, then?

MOLLY. Faith, I couldn't keep from laughing in the face of him. He wanted shaving-water, and him no more than a slip of a boy that's hardly loosed from his mother's apron-strings. "Is it yourself you're going to shave?" says I. "And maybe when I bring you up the water I'll bring you up the cat, too, and you can shave her." [1]

KELLY [*admiringly*]. Ah, you've always got the ready tongue, Molly.

GRADY. I'll have to be going in to the cook now, I expect, and giving her the visitor's orders. Was the like of such a visitor ever seen, I ask you? Ordering his own breakfast in the Squire's house, and telling me to look sharp about it, too! [*To Molly and Kelly.*] Do you two, now, get away out of here. It's little I care about the young jackanapes, but the Squire and the mistress'll be along presently, and the hall's no place for you, Corney Kelly, even if the Squire does think a deal of you for keeping his horses in good trim. [*Exit Grady.*]

MOLLY. He's angry in good earnest. But sure 'tis a queer thing for the master to be having a lad with ways like those in the house, and him always so particular with everybody. Why, when I passed the door last night, 'twas sitting in the best armchair he was, with the Squire

[1] Molly must have told this joke about the cat to her friends, for we find Sullivan, Captain Fitzsimons's man in Thackeray's "Barry Lyndon," making the same remark to young Redmond Barry under similar circumstances.

and the mistress both standing up, and his legs crossed before him, as comfortable as a lord.

KELLY [*in a confidential tone*]. Would you like me to tell you a fine secret, Molly?

MOLLY. Why wouldn't I like to know a secret of any kind whatever?

KELLY. Will you dance with me at the village to-night, if I tell it you?

MOLLY. I will that. But be quick with your secret, for I'll have to be getting back to my work before the mistress comes along.

KELLY. 'Tis all a trick of my own about the lad above-stairs.

MOLLY. A trick, you say? What kind of a trick, then?

KELLY. Well, 'tis this way. Last night, as I was walking down the road smoking my pipe, there comes along this young bantam-cock of a fellow. He pulls up his horse and says to me, as patronizing as if he was King George himself, "Can you tell me, my man, if there's any place hereabouts where a gentleman could lie for the night? None of your cabins," he says, flourishing his whip, "but a place where a gentleman that could pay for real comfort would be at home. The best house in the district is what I'm looking for, my good fellow," says he again. "Is it the *very* best house hereabouts you're looking for?" says I. "And what else would a gentleman like me be wanting?" says he. "Well, then," says I, "you go on half a mile down the road, and then take the turn to the left, and you'll see the house that's the best in Ardagh." "There's good quarters there?" he asks. "As good as any in all Ireland," says I, speaking nothing but the truth. "Well, then, good-night to you, my man," says he, and rides off, as proud as you please.

MOLLY [*in a tone of consternation*]. And 'twas here you sent him!

KELLY. Isn't this the best house in Ardagh, I'd like to know?

MOLLY. You sent him to Squire Featherston's when he was

looking for an inn! Sure the Squire'll not forgive you if he finds it out. 'Tis a kind master that he is, but he'll not be for putting up with the like of that, I'm thinking.

KELLY. Ah, then, I've not much fear of his finding out at all, that 'twas myself that sent him here, for the young sprig had no knowledge of me, whatever. And if he did — why, the Squire's fond of a joke himself, they've all been telling me ever since I came on to Ardagh. And if ever any one needed to have his comb cut, 'twas my young gentleman of last night, with his airs and his flourishes, and the Squire's the right one to be doing it for him.

MOLLY [*in a puzzled tone*]. The Squire never let on the least bit in the world that the lad was no friend of his.

KELLY. I wonder now what that was for. But we've a good tale to tell, whichever way the cat jumps. Let's be off now, for here's the master and mistress coming. I'll go below stairs with you, and maybe we'll hear something from Mr. Grady when breakfast's over.

MOLLY. Ah, sure, 'tis you that has the head for a clever trick, Mr. Kelly. I wish there may no harm come to you for this one, though.

KELLY. I'll not mind anything whatever, if you'll keep your promise about the dance to-night, Molly.

[*Exeunt Molly and Kelly.*]

[*Enter Squire Featherston and Mrs. Featherston. Mrs. Featherston goes up to one of the chairs at the table and is about to be seated, when the Squire checks her.*]

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON [*in a tone of pretended concern*]. For shame, my dear! It would never do for the landlord and landlady to take their places before their guest was seated. We must e'en stand and wait for him, willy-nilly.

MRS. FEATHERSTON. I protest, the part grows too difficult for me to play.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. Nay, as for me, I find it a pleasant enough change to be Boniface for a while, instead of the

Squire — to be bullied a trifle, instead of being made obeisance to. 'Tis a moment's breath of reality such as seldom touches us little great folk of the landed gentry. I have my fill of seeing everybody about me hat in hand, and I should be but ungrateful not to welcome any one who says a few rude words to me — even though 'tis only a foolish lad making a foolish blunder.

MRS. FEATHERSTON [*petulantly*]. Well, Mr. Featherston, I am less fond of rude words than you, and I shan't be sorry when the jest is over.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. A little patience, madam, and the game will play itself out. [*A noise is heard as if of furniture being pushed about.*] Hark, I think I hear my gentleman bestirring himself. We must take pains not to make it too hard for him when he comes to his senses, — eh, my dear? I confess, I've taken a liking to the scapegrace, in spite of his impudence.

[*Enter Goldsmith, humming a tune loudly. He strides up to the table, draws the chair up as noisily as possible, and throws himself back in it with an air of great importance.*]

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON [*bowing low*]. Good-morning to you, sir. I hope you rested well.

GOLDSMITH [*with an air of nonchalance*]. Ha! landlord, at your post? Never fear; I'll not forget to call for a morning tankard to make the reckoning longer. The house shan't suffer that has *me* for a guest, I promise you.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON [*deprecatingly*]. Nay, sir, I but inquired how you had slept.

GOLDSMITH. Oh, as to that, so-so.

MRS. FEATHERSTON. Was the bed not to your liking, sir?

GOLDSMITH [*carelessly*]. 'Twas not so ill for an inn, maybe. But you should get fresher hangings when the next packman comes to your gate, Mistress Boniface.

MRS. FEATHERSTON [*bridling*]. 'Tis a pity that our tapestries did not please you. They have some value in the eyes of judges of the art.

GOLDSMITH. A fig for all musty, fusty hangings of any sort whatever, say I. But I vow I shall be starved if you dawdle away the time much longer with your talk of tapestries and such. What about breakfast, pray? What can you give me, now?

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON [*rubbing his hands*]. We have in the larder, I believe, a joint of cold beef, a leg of cold veal, a ham, and a pigeon-pie, from which we should be honored to have you select your meal. I can especially vouch for the merits of the pie.

GOLDSMITH. None of your cold victuals for me. 'Tis quite enough to have them offered you at night, after a ride of a dozen miles or more, without beginning the next day upon them. You're a pretty landlord, man! I warrant you've forgotten the hot cake I bespoke last night. [*To Mrs. Featherston.*] You should jog his memory, hostess!

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. I protest, I *had* forgotten. But I make no doubt that the butler — I should say rather, the factotum — to whom your honor was pleased to give the order, has kept your honor's wishes in mind better than I.

GOLDSMITH. Have the fellow in, then, and waste no time about it. I must be getting on my way as quick as may be, and I have no mind to go on with only your cold comfort in my stomach.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. He shall be here directly, sir.

[*Rings bell.*]

MRS. FEATHERSTON. I wish, sir, that we might have succeeded better in winning your favor.

GOLDSMITH. Nay, Madam Boniface, never heed me overmuch. 'Tis only a traveler's way, after all. Who would give a snap of his fingers for us travelers if we were always content?

[*Enter Grady.*]

GOLDSMITH [*with a change of manner*]. Ah, here's the old cock himself. [*Grady starts indignantly, but controls himself.*]

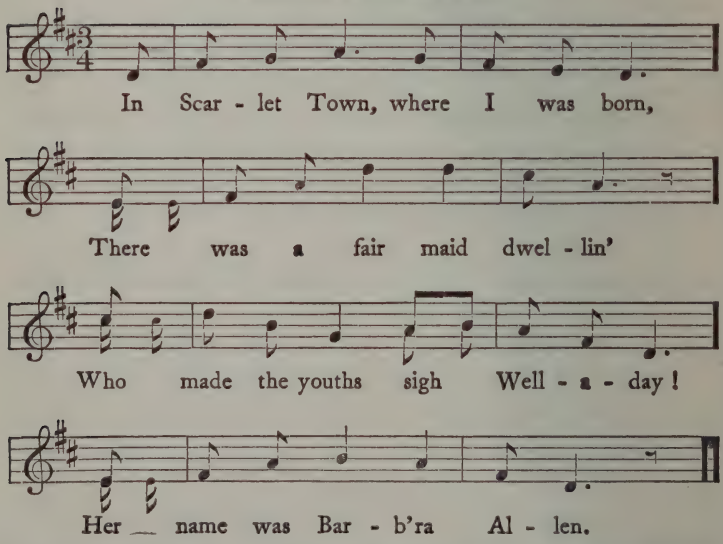
The solemn look of him's worth an extra shilling in the reckoning. [*To Grady.*] Did you remember what I bespoke for breakfast, now?

GRADY [*very gravely*]. I did, sir. The cook's only just now drawing the cake out of the oven.

GOLDSMITH. Up with it, then, double-quick. And a draught of your best ale with it — your best, mind you — none of your second brew.

[*Grady goes out. Goldsmith lolls back in his chair and sings* "Barbara Allen" *quite audibly, continuing while Grady reënters bearing a tankard, and followed by Molly, who carries a plate with a hot cake. Grady and Molly set the plate and tankard before Goldsmith, who still sings away, regardless of Grady's looks of offended astonishment and Molly's only half-suppressed amusement. Exit Molly.*]

BARBARA ALLEN



GOLDSMITH [*eating*]. 'Tis not so well-flavored a cake as is to

be had at the Bull in Edgeworthstown. [*Takes up the tankard.*] This ale is something too thin for me. [*To the Squire.*] Have you none headier?

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. How is our cellar, Grady? Have we another brew of ale?

GRADY [*stiffly*]. Never a one, sir.

GOLDSMITH. Ah, well, a poor drink is better than none. [*Drains the tankard.*] 'Tis but a thin brew to travel on, none the less. I warrant you our friend yonder [*pointing to Grady*] knows a secret or two about it. The water-butt's a trusty helper when the keg's half dry, eh? Nay, 'tis no matter [*as Grady seems about to speak*]. I bear no ill-will. 'Tis all in the day's journey when one takes the road. And now, my man [*to Grady*], do you tell the stable-lad to give my horse another measure of oats. [*Grady is about to leave.*] And tell him, too, that he's not to let more than half the measure find the way into his pocket. Will you mind the message, now?

GRADY [*who has started for the door, turns about, facing Goldsmith, and gesticulates violently as he begins to speak, angrily*]. No, I'll not be after minding any such message as that. I've heard enough from you now. I'll carry no such word to Tim O'Rourke, my own cousin's nephew's son, that's known to every one as the honestest lad in the parish, and me recommending him to the master for the place here. Is it in a thieving tavern that you think you are, indeed, with your talk of stealing oats and watering the drink? Sure, it's in a low-lived shebeen that you deserve to be, with your manners and your doings, and not in a gentleman's house, at all!

GOLDSMITH [*who has listened to the tirade in open-mouthed astonishment*]. A gentleman's house!

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON [*to Mrs. Featherston*]. Ah, madam, now that honest Grady has taken a hand, our game is over, you see.

GRADY [*subsiding somewhat*]. Your honor'll not hold it

against me, I hope, that I've forgot myself for a minute, and given a taste o' the rough side of my tongue to a lad that's got no kind of manners at all! 'Twas as much as flesh and blood could stand to see a buckeen like him yonder misbehaving to you and the mistress, and you so considerate-like, because, faith, it's your visitor he is. But I know your honor'd never wish the characters to be taken away from your servants, and me not to speak for them, that's so proud of their service with the Squire.

GOLDSMITH [*who has grown more and more uneasy*]. Proud — of their service — with the Squire?

GRADY [*turning sharply on Goldsmith*]. Ah, and I may well say that, for Squire Featherston's known far and wide to be the best master, and the finest gentleman too, in all the county!

GOLDSMITH [*looking from one to the other*]. Squire Featherston?

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON [*bowing low*]. At your service, my young friend.

GOLDSMITH [*excitedly*]. What's this house called, then? Has it any name? Tell me, madam [*to Mrs. Featherston*], pray!

MRS. FEATHERSTON. This house has always been called Featherston Manor since Sir Richard Featherston built it, a hundred and fifty years ago.

GOLDSMITH [*rising and slapping his knee*]. Then I've been a bigger fool than any one ever took me for — and that's saying a great deal!

MRS. FEATHERSTON [*taking a seat*]. Well, at any rate, I suppose I may sit down in my own house now.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON [*genially*]. Nay, never mind a bit of folly, my lad. There's many a wise man has been a fool, and the world no whit the worse for it.

GOLDSMITH. But I've been the very greatest fool in all Ireland! Here have I tumbled myself headforemost into a gentleman's house, and given everybody the same orders

as though 'twas my own, and misconducted myself mightily altogether, the more shame to me, when all the while 'twas only the guinea I had to spend at an inn, that was burning a hole in my pocket!

GRADY. An inn, indeed! And was it an inn you took the Squire's home for, and his honor himself for the innkeeper? Sure that caps all!

MRS. FEATHERSTON. But tell us, pray, how you came to think this was an inn.

GOLDSMITH. I was directed here straight enough, and told I'd find the best inn in all the countryside.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. An honor, I'm sure. But who paid us the compliment of commending us so highly?

GOLDSMITH. A smooth-spoken young fellow in riding-boots who was strolling along the road a half-mile or so from here, as I was coming up it. He was so ready with his tongue — ah! I'd like nothing better than to say a few words to him this minute.

GRADY. Riding-boots, is it? And did you take any notice of his hat, now?

GOLDSMITH. There was a sizable cockade in it — yes, and 'twas a white one.

GRADY. The rascal! I've got him, sure enough!

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. Ah, Grady, can you help us to find our amiable patron and our young friend's kind guide?

GRADY. I can fetch him up here in no more than the shake of a lamb's tail, if your honor will give me leave.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. By all means, let us make his acquaintance.

GRADY. Very well, your honor. [*Exit.*]

GOLDSMITH [*hanging his head*]. 'Tis not the first blunder I've made, nor is it likely to be the last; but I'm distressed that I cut so sorry a figure in this house.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. Nay, a word has set it all straight. 'Twas a transparent blunder enough, and our evening here, as Madam will tell you, has been the less dull for

your little adventure; so there is something to be counted on the credit side of your score.

[*Grady appears in the doorway, followed by Kelly, who has as much of a swaggering air about him as is compatible with his respect for the Squire.*]

GOLDSMITH. There's the very fellow now! [*To the Squire.*] Do you but ask him what he told me.

GRADY. I've got him to come up, your honor; but he declares he told the young gentleman not a word but what was true, and how to come at the rights of that I don't know. [*To Molly, who enters with a tray.*] You've no need here at all, my girl.

MOLLY [*timidly*]. I thought his honor might be wanting the dishes cleared off.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. I suspect Molly has something besides dishes on her mind. Let her stay, Grady, if her mistress [*bowing to Mrs. Featherston*] is willing. [*To Kelly.*] Well, Kelly, my young friend here has a crow to pluck with you, and I've a mind to stand by and see the plucking.

GOLDSMITH [*ruefully*]. A crow, indeed! The bird in that bargain was more likely a gull! [*To Kelly.*] What did you make a fool of me last night for, misdirecting me when I asked a straight question?

KELLY. I didn't misdirect you, anyway whatever.

GRADY. Hark to that now!

GOLDSMITH [*indignantly*]. How have you the face to tell me that! Didn't I ask you for the best house in all the countryside, and didn't you tell me to go on till I came here?

KELLY. Well, and where will you find a better house in Ardagh than Featherston Manor, I'd like to know?

[*Pause. The Squire begins to chuckle.*]

GOLDSMITH. But it was an *inn* I asked you for, man!

KELLY. 'Twas a *house* you said, and 'twas a *house* I sent you to, and never a better one in all Ireland, nor one with a better master or mistress to it. Who's to blame if we

were at cross-purposes in our talk? Sure, you were so proud-like that there was no stopping you when you once got started on your road.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. The clouds begin to lift. [*To Goldsmith.*] Do you see, now, how we came by the honor of your patronage?

GOLDSMITH. I see that I'd best have stayed at old Paddy Byrne's school and minded my book with him, blockhead that I am! 'Twould have been better than going to the fine school at Edgeworthstown, that I'm on my way home from now, and disgracing everybody there, and my poor father at Lissoy into the bargain. Won't they all say when they hear of it, "What else but folly did any one ever expect of Parson Goldsmith's Noll? Sure, he was born a fool, and a fool he'll stay."

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. Parson Goldsmith of Lissoy, you say your father is? Not the Charles Goldsmith who took orders in the year fourteen?

GOLDSMITH. He was ordained in the very year the Queen died, I've often heard him say.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. Why, this is a meeting, indeed! My dear [*to Mrs. Featherston*], allow me to present to you the son of my old college-mate at Trinity. [*Mrs. Featherston courtesies. Goldsmith bows.*] Many a lecture his father and I dozed through side by side, while good Dr. Longley was droning his way through the metaphysics. But I woke up and went on to livelier doings, while he had to put on the surplice and bands at his patron's bidding. Ah, well, he was cut out for a parson, and I'll warrant he makes a good one.

GOLDSMITH. The Lissoy people can tell you enough about that. There's no vicar that they'll admit to be the equal of theirs. But [*hanging his head*] I'm afraid they'd not give the same character to his son Noll. They'd have fine tales to tell you of his blunderings, and now here's another added to them, and the worst of them all.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. Nay, my lad, the blunder is over and done with, and a friend — or two friends, if I know Madam as well as I should — come out of it for you. I suppose, though, there's a score to be settled with your guide here. [*Looking at Kelly, with something of an air of severity.*] 'Twas not precisely in the bargain, when I hired him to see to my horses, that he should turn me into an innkeeper.

MOLLY [*coming forward, deprecatingly*]. Oh, sure, your honor'd not be too hard on the lad for a bit of a joke!

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON. Well, we shall hear how our guest is minded in the matter. [*To Goldsmith.*] Should not my ready-tongued gentleman yonder pay something of a penalty for his prank?

GOLDSMITH. Why, sir, if you will hearken to me, Master Kelly may go back to his stables with a clean slate. 'Twas nothing but my own folly that led to it all, and I want no one else to do the paying for it.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON [*to Mrs. Featherston*]. What say you, madam? Shall it be as our young friend would have it?

MRS. FEATHERSTON. 'Twas a sad idle trick to be sure, to make an inn of Featherston Manor, and an innkeeper's wife of its mistress. But — bygones are best let to be bygones, I suppose.

SQUIRE FEATHERSTON [*to Kelly*]. Well, since the two ladies are for having it so, there's naught for it but to wipe out the score. So get you back to the stables, and see that our visitor's horse is ready for the road. [*To Molly.*] And do you go with the rascal and preach him a sound sermon about keeping out of mischief.

MOLLY. I will that, your honor. And thank you kindly for not holding his mischievous ways against him. [*To Goldsmith.*] And I'll say thank you to you, too, sir, for bearing no malice.

KELLY [*to Squire and Mrs. Featherston*]. Service, your

honors! [*To Goldsmith.*] 'Twas a good house with a good master I sent you to after all, you see, sir.

[*Molly pulls him sharply by the sleeve. Exeunt Kelly and Molly.*]

GRADY [*to Goldsmith*]. Sure, and if I may be so bold, I'd like to say myself that I'm sorry for having been so free with my tongue to a young gentleman that's got the kind heart like your own.

GOLDSMITH. Ah, well, the wiseacres will be shaking their head over Noll Goldsmith's folly many a time, I make no doubt. Town or country, man or boy, 'twill be all one to him, I'm thinking; for his soft heart will lead him into many a scrape that a better head than his would be bothered to get out of. The best he can do will be to make a bit of a song or tell a merry tale about his silly doings, so that the other folk may have a laugh when they are well over. And that reminds me, Squire, there were some lines came into my foolish noddle, as I was riding through the lane yesterday, about the death of a mad dog. 'Tis a sweet subject. Shall I make a shift to let you hear them before I go? 'Tis all that I can do to make amends for my misdoings at Featherston Manor. [*To Mrs. Featherston.*] Have I your leave, madam? [*Mrs. Featherston inclines her head.*] [*To the Squire.*] And yours, sir? [*The Squire nods assent.*] 'Twill not be long, I promise you.

[*Goldsmith takes center of stage, and begins to sing*[1] (*or recite*), "Good people all—" *Grady, at side table, beats time; Squire and Mrs. Featherston follow attentively, smiling. Molly and Kelly are seen listening at door.*]

[1] Madame Liza Lehmann's very effective setting to this ballad may be procured at any establishment where music is sold. If the Goldsmith of the occasion prefers to omit the singing, the "Elegy" may be recited instead of sung.

SONG

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF A MAD DOG

Good people all, of every sort,
  Give ear unto my song;
And if you find it wondrous short
  It cannot keep you long.

In Islington there lived a man
  Of whom the world did say
That still a godly race he ran
  Whene'er he went to pray.

A kind and gentle heart he had
  To comfort friends and foes;
The naked every day he clad,
  When he put on his clothes.

And in that town a dog was found,
  As many dogs there be,
Both mongrel, puppy, whelp, and hound,
  And curs of low degree.

This dog and man at first were friends,
  But when a pique began,
The dog, to gain his private ends,
  Went mad, and bit the man.

Around from all the neighboring streets
  The wondering neighbors ran,
And swore the dog had lost his wits
  To bite so good a man.

The wound it seem'd both sore and sad
  To every Christian eye,

And while they swore the dog was mad,
  They swore the man would die.

But soon a wonder came to light
  That show'd the rogues they lied;
The man recover'd of the bite,
  The dog it was that died.

CURTAIN

THE PRINCE OF COURT PAINTERS[1]

By CONSTANCE D'ARCY MACKAY

CHARACTERS

George Romney (*the Prince of Court Painters*)
Mary Romney, *his wife.*
Lucy Elridge, *a neighbor's child.*

Place: *A village in the north of England.*
Time: *1799.*
Scene: *Mary Romney's home.*

The living-room of a peasant-like cottage which, with its dark floor and walls of time-stained wood, and its great rafters, suggests the seventeenth rather than the eighteenth century.

In center background a dark oak door opens on a wild bit of moorland stretching towards the western skyline. On each side of this door long narrow latticed windows swinging inward, and curtained with faintly flowered muslin.

At left a wide-mouthed hearth built of cobblestones. Iron andirons and an iron kettle on a hob. On the hearthshelf candles in pewter candlesticks, and a plate or two. Everywhere simplicity and frugality is manifest. A dark wooden settle by fire, facing audience.

A dark-stained table in the center of the room. It is round, and made of plain wood. There are also in other parts of the room some quaint sturdy chairs of dark wood set against the wall.

[1] From *The Beau of Bath and Other One Act Plays*, by Constance D'Arcy Mackay. Copyright, 1915, by Henry Holt and Company, One Park Avenue, New York City, to whom application to produce this play must be made. It is here reprinted for class use only by arrangement with these publishers.

Against the right wall a dark oak cupboard, containing earthenware dishes, and a little food — such as a loaf of wheaten bread, butter, cheese, and honey. Beyond this a churn, and a spinning wheel for Mary Romney's use.

At the rise of the curtain, a low fire is burning on the hearth, and through the open door and western windows the light of late afternoon shines on Mary Romney as she sits at her spinning wheel, right. She is not a young woman, but age has touched her lightly. Her figure is still straight and supple. Her snow-white hair only adds to the charming effect of the ivory pallor of her face. Her eyes have retained their look of youth, of a spirit that is never done hoping. There is about her an air of gentle strength. She wears a dress of dove-gray homespun, with a white linen kerchief crossed on her breast. She has no trinkets or adornments of any kind, and needs none. As the curtain rises, she is singing, her voice blending pleasantly with the hum of the wheel:

MARY ROMNEY.

"Rest! Rest! Twilight is best.
The day's storms die.
Sleep. Sleep. White stars will keep
Their watch on high."

[*While Mary Romney sings, Lucy Elridge appears on the threshold. She is a small child of seven or eight years. She wears a high-waisted frock of white muslin, plainly made, and white stockings with low black slippers laced with black ribbon above her ankles. On her head a mob cap of white swiss. She carries a little wicker basket with flowers in it.*]

MARY ROMNEY [*rising*]. Come in.

LUCY [*entering*]. What do you sing?

MARY ROMNEY. A lullaby
That sends tired children off to sleep.

LUCY [*presenting flowers*]. You've none;

You live alone — away from every one.
But I love you. And that is why I came.

MARY ROMNEY. Thank you, dear Lucy.

LUCY. And I love your name.
Just "Mary Romney." [*Dwells on it musically.*]
I've heard people say
That some one married you, and went away.
His name was Romney, too. And then you left
The place where you were living.

MARY ROMNEY. What a weft
Do gossips weave! With what threads is it strung!

LUCY [*innocently sage*]. It happened long ago, when you were young.
I heard it all. Something to you was sent.
And since that time both food and warmth you've spent
On the world's poor. Who are the world's poor?

MARY ROMNEY [*quietly*]. Those
To whom life gives the thorn, but not the rose.

LUCY. I do not understand.

MARY ROMNEY. How should you, dear?

LUCY [*coaxingly, leaning against Mary Romney's knee*]. Tell me about "When you were young."

MARY ROMNEY. I fear
I cannot. [*Staring before her.*] Why, to think of such a thing
Is like a dream. Black as the raven's wing
My hair was then.

LUCY. And were your cheeks as pink
As Mother's are?

MARY ROMNEY. Yes. Is it strange to think
That I was young once? Ah, time's wind can blow
The reddest roses into flowers of snow.

LUCY [*puzzled*]. Like Winter?

MARY ROMNEY. Aye.

LUCY [*innocently*]. Was he — was Romney old
And cross like Gaffer Matthew? Did he scold?

MARY ROMNEY [*deeply*]. No.

[*She forgets Lucy. Her face is lit by an inner flame.*]

He was young — young as the morning star,
And blithe as Spring. [*With sudden quiet.*] But, child, those days are far —
Too far to talk about.

[*Lucy turns reluctantly and takes her basket.*]

Dear, must you go?

LUCY. My Mother says my feet are always slow
Upon the homeward way.

[*Mary Romney crosses to cupboard, takes out a pat of butter and a little tart.*]

MARY ROMNEY [*indicating Lucy's basket*]. Child, will this hold
A little pat of butter, bright as gold,
And a small tart?

LUCY. I thank you.

MARY ROMNEY. Now run home.
I would not have you linger through the gloam.

[*She kisses Lucy, who exits sedately, carrying her basket. For a moment Mary Romney leans by the door watching her; then she returns to her wheel. The light of afternoon has faded into the glow of sunset. As Mary Romney sits at her wheel, a shadow falls across the doorway. She looks up and sees a slim dark man, worn, but not bent with age. His hair is grizzled, and hangs loosely about his pale passionate face. He wears a weatherworn black cloak and black suit. A broad felt hat, with dilapidated brim, a very scarecrow of a hat. From under its brim the haunted eyes of the man look out like the eyes of a lost soul. Fatigue, hunger, despair have set their thumb-mark on him. He belongs to the Lost Legion of the world. Under his arm he carries a battered portfolio of black leather, worn gray with time and exposure. No one would ever guess this apparition to be Romney. Least of all does Rom-*

ney's wife guess it. Too many years have come and gone since their last meeting.]

ROMNEY. Could you give shelter to a traveler
So worn and weary that he scarce can stir
Another foot along the road?

[*Mary rises and looks at him pityingly.*]

I fear
That I have startled you. And yet — look clear
And see what begs a refuge! Bone and shred
Can scarce work harm to any. [*He coughs.*]

MARY ROMNEY [*with swift compassion*]. Warmed and fed
You shall be.

ROMNEY. Thank you — greatly.

[*He crosses weakly to the fire. Mary crosses to the cupboard and brings him a plate of bread and a cup of cordial.*]

MARY ROMNEY. Sit you down.
Often do folk pass by here from the town,
Early and late, and though I live alone
I never have had cause to fear.

ROMNEY [*sits, leaning back, spent*]. A stone
Is what the world gives when you ask for bread;
Yet you give this ——

MARY ROMNEY. Eat, and be comforted.
[*Cheerily.*] "Darkest before the dawn" the old wives say.

ROMNEY. I am a traveler who has lost his way,
And followed ignis fatuus till the night
Closed in on me, and left me without light.

MARY ROMNEY [*to herself*]. He wanders.

ROMNEY [*half-hearing her*]. Aye. Oh, I have wandered far,
And thought the dancing wisp-light was a star,
The light called "*Art.*"

MARY ROMNEY. You are an artist? [*He bows.*] Then
You must have heard of him!

[*Her voice thrills with pride.*]

ROMNEY. Him?

MARY ROMNEY. Whom all men
Praise. The great Romney.
[*The name transfigures her.*]
ROMNEY. He is great no more.
Why, I have heard he goes from door to door
Glad of a little charity.
MARY ROMNEY [*proudly*]. You err.
He is the prince of all court painters, sir.
His friends are lords and duchesses.
ROMNEY. They slip
From him as rats desert a rotting ship
That's settling down and down.
MARY ROMNEY [*torn*]. Is this thing true?
ROMNEY [*his haunted eyes on her*]. Should I give falsehood as a coin to you
Who are so kind?
MARY ROMNEY [*passionately*]. Where is he?
ROMNEY. Who can say?
MARY ROMNEY. Had he no wife?
ROMNEY. In some far yesterday
I think he had. But when Sir Joshua said:
"Forget your country marriage, and instead
Take Art to wife," he left her. Well, his art
Brought fame and money; but his secret heart
Like a closed house, was haunted by a ghost. . . .
MARY ROMNEY [*quietly*]. Yet there were other women.
ROMNEY [*wearily*]. Oh, a host
Of frilled and furbelowed great ladies. . . .
MARY ROMNEY. One
Of these was called the Lady Hamilton,
Was she not? [*She lights a candle on the mantelshelf.*]
ROMNEY. Yes.
MARY ROMNEY. And he loved her?
ROMNEY. Her face
Bewitched the artist in him, and her grace
Filled many a canvas.

MARY ROMNEY. And he loved her.

ROMNEY [*rousing himself*]. *No.*
He loved her beauty. [*With renewed quiet.*] That was long ago,
And all of it is like a tale that's told.
[*Bitterly.*] Only one love did Romney's bleak heart hold
And her he wronged.

MARY ROMNEY. And will he not return?

ROMNEY [*wryly*]. And say, "My wife, whose love I seemed to spurn,
You did not share in my celebrity;
But now I'm old and poor. Pray comfort me."
[*For an instant his face lights sardonically.*]
I think that Romney would not fall so low
For all his faults.

MARY ROMNEY. Does he — does Romney know
Where his wife lives?

ROMNEY. Nay. Somewhere in the North.
He's lost all trace. [*Rises.*] 'Tis time that I set forth
Ere night falls utterly.
[*He opens his portfolio, fumbles in it, takes out a sketch.*]
I pray you take
A little sketch, such as I used to make.
'Tis all the coin I have. [*He coughs.*]

MARY ROMNEY [*amazed*]. 'Tis finely done.
Aye, wondrous fine!
[*Before he has grasped what she is doing, she takes another picture from the portfolio, the rosy portrait of a young and beautiful country girl.*]
Oh, let me see this one!

ROMNEY. A sketch of Romney's wife, made by himself
From memory. Life-sized.

MARY ROMNEY [*stooping at hearth and taking money from under loose stone*]. Beneath this shelf
I have ten pounds and more. Sell this to me.
[*As if in explanation of her strange conduct.*]
It is so young! So fair!

ROMNEY [*looking at it with the enthrallment of the artist*]. It cannot be.
I cannot sell it. It is Romney's wife.
Painted from memory. And true to life
Each contour that I loved.

MARY ROMNEY. *You* loved!

ROMNEY. Yes, I
Am Romney.

[*He looks at the picture as if held by a spell. For all that he sees or hears he is alone in the room.*]

MARY ROMNEY. *Romney!*

ROMNEY. Why, with what a cry
You speak my name.

[*They gaze at each other in the dim light.*]

MARY ROMNEY. Mine also.

[*She faces him steadily. Romney snatches up the candle, looks at her. Puts it down.*]

ROMNEY. God is just.
He leads me, old and humble, in the dust
Before your door ——

[*His head is bowed for an instant. He cannot look at her. Slowly, and with dread, he raises his eyes, and meets her answering look, her gesture towards him. Speaks brokenly, uncertainly.*]

I, who should be reviled. . . .
You can forgive me. . . .

MARY ROMNEY [*with beautiful maternal tenderness*]. Why, you are my child.
My genius child, who all day long must roam,
And then at twilight sees the lights of home.

ROMNEY. *Mary!*

MARY ROMNEY. I ask no question of the past.
What was mine at the first is now mine last.

ROMNEY [*still brokenly: to himself*]. "And ministering angels came to bless ——"
Ah, but I have no right —— [*Yet his eyes implore her.*]

MARY ROMNEY. After day's stress
Comes peace and twilight. Look, where the last bar
Of sunset fades, the steadfast evening star!

[*Through the last rose of sunset and the gathering violet of dusk, the white glimmer of the evening star is seen through the open doorway. Mary Romney, her hand on Romney's shoulder, watches it, and with a half breath sings very low and soothingly, her voice a crooning murmur:*]

"Rest! Rest! Twilight is best. The day's storms die."

ROMNEY. What do you sing?

MARY ROMNEY [*with ineffable tenderness*]. A tired child's lullaby.

[*The music of the song is faintly continued by the orchestra as the curtain falls.*]

FRANCES AND FRANCIS [1]

By JAMES PLAISTED WEBBER

CHARACTERS

Miss Forbes, *a secretary.*
James H. Northern, *an actor-manager.*
Frances Summerhays, *a child actress.*

Setting: *Interior of James H. Northern's apartments. The room is a combination of study and office. In the left hand flat, up stage, a door leads into a hallway, presumably reached by an elevator; in the right hand flat, up stage, another leads into his dining-room. Up stage, center, is a flat-topped library table, used as a desk. It is equipped with a portable typewriter, a telephone, ink bottle, etc. There, too, are some manuscripts of plays, and some smaller manuscripts of "sides" or individual parts. Either on top of the desk or in a drawer are placed a white wig appropriate for one playing the Earl of Dorincourt in "Little Lord Fauntleroy," a drooping moustache for the same character, a monocle, a bottle of spirit-gum, a stick of white grease paint, and a hand-mirror. Near the right hand door is a coat-stand on which hang Mr. Northern's soft hat and gloves. In the opposite corner, near the left hand door, is an umbrella-stand holding an umbrella and two or three canes. At the right of the desk is a waste-paper basket; and at its left, a footstool or hassock. On the wall may hang a picture or two, possibly framed prints of the Sargent portraits of Booth and of Jefferson and there might*

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be a large wall map of the United States. Several chairs, including an armchair down stage, right, and a chair, behind the desk and facing the audience, and bookcases complete the furniture. A careful reading of the play will reveal just what objects named or suggested above are essential to the action and what ones may be omitted. The whole effect should be one not of luxury but good taste.

After the rise of the curtain, through the door leading from the hall, upper left, enters Miss Forbes, a comely stenographer, anywhere from nineteen to twenty-three years of age. She has two or three newspapers, which she lays on the desk. Then crossing behind it, she hangs up her coat and hat. Returning to the table, she sits and prepares to begin her day's work. Opening one of the papers, she clips out a short item, presumably for the manager's scrap-book. Presently James H. Northern, a man of perhaps forty-five, steps just inside the room through the dining-room door, upper right. He is evidently not through breakfast; for he has a napkin in his hand.

NORTHERN. Oh, it's you, Miss Forbes! Good-morning!

MISS FORBES. Good-morning, Mr. Northern.

NORTHERN. Well, anything in the papers about us this morning?

MISS FORBES [*reading the clipping*]. Just a squib from *The Times*. "Among the revivals promised for this season is James H. Northern's revival of 'Little Lord Fauntleroy.' It is many years since Broadway has seen this piece on the spoken stage. It is understood that Mr. Northern will himself play the Earl of Dorincourt."

NORTHERN. Not much in that. We must push our publicity as soon as I get a Fauntleroy.

MISS FORBES. You're set on having a boy play it?

NORTHERN. Oh, absolutely!

MISS FORBES. He won't be easy to find.

NORTHERN. Possibly not. But we'll get one if I have to "survey mankind from China to Peru."

MISS FORBES. You've tried the casting-offices?

NORTHERN. Well, I was into Blakeney's yesterday.

MISS FORBES. He have any one?

NORTHERN. Oh, he named half a dozen impossible creatures — brought in three or four — incredibly bad. Of course he tried to talk me into trying out some girls.

MISS FORBES. But you didn't?

NORTHERN. Not on your life! I've seen too many good boys' parts ruined by girls and little women. — I'm going to try Lyman Chamberlaine's to-day.

MISS FORBES [*indicating the napkin in his hand*]. Coffee'll be getting cold.

NORTHERN. Righto!

[*As he starts toward the dining-room, the telephone rings.*]

MISS FORBES. I'll take it. [*She takes down the receiver as Northern exits to the dining-room.*] Hello! Yes, this is Mr. Northern's . . . yes, the actor-manager's. . . . His secretary . . . Oh, you're the theatrical casting-office. . . . Oh, Mr. Blakeney. You've found a child for Fauntleroy? Good! . . . What's that? . . . A little girl? . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Blakeney — that won't do. No! Mr. Northern's set his heart on having a boy play it. . . . No, sir, he won't see her. Says he won't think of a girl. . . . No, don't send her. . . . What's that? . . . You have already? I'm very sorry. He simply won't see her. Good-bye!

NORTHERN [*reëntering from right and munching toast*]. Who's that?

MISS FORBES. Mr. Blakeney, sir, at the agency. He's sent a little girl to try out for Fauntleroy.

NORTHERN. I hope you told him it was no use.

MISS FORBES. Oh, yes, I told him, but it was too late. She's on her way — probably be here any minute. — There's some one coming up now.

NORTHERN. Well, send her away as kindly as you can. Blakeney isn't fair to the child.

[*Northern exits right. Then there is a rap on the door at the left.*]

MISS FORBES. Come in!

[*Enter from the left Frances Summerhays, a pretty child of fourteen. She is quite charming, with a touch of the professional child about her.*]

FRANCES. Is this Mr. Northern's?

MISS FORBES. Yes, my child. What can I do for you? I'm his secretary.

FRANCES. May I speak with him?

MISS FORBES. On business?

FRANCES. Yes, ma'am, on *professional* business.

MISS FORBES. Are you the little girl sent by Mr. Blakeney?

FRANCES. Yes, ma'am.

MISS FORBES. I'm sorry, dear, but it's no use. Mr. Northern has quite decided to have a boy play Fauntleroy in his revival of the piece. Didn't they tell you so at the casting-office?

FRANCES. Yes, ma'am, but Mr. Blakeney told me to come just the same.

MISS FORBES. Very like Blakeney!

FRANCES. Ma'am?

MISS FORBES. I say Blakeney's always sending us folk we can't use on the chance of his getting a commission. But, my child, you haven't a ghost of a show.

FRANCES. You mean he won't even see me?

MISS FORBES. No, he won't even see you.

FRANCES. Not even though I know the part?

MISS FORBES. Not even though you know the part.

FRANCES. Oh, dear! I played it in stock two weeks last summer and I just *adored* it! — And I can show you the *loveliest* press notices.

[*Frances produces some clippings, but Miss Forbes doesn't offer to look at them.*]

MISS FORBES. My dear, there is absolutely no chance.

FRANCES [*turning toward hall door*]. I s'pose if I had a brother who could do it, he'd get an audition.

MISS FORBES [*taking up her work, catches only a word or two*]. Your brother? Does he know the part?

FRANCES [*upon whom an idea dawns*]. As well as I do.

MISS FORBES. How old is he?

FRANCES. Same's me — I mean I.

MISS FORBES. Oh, you're twins?

FRANCES. Something like that.

MISS FORBES [*not heeding this last*]. And he's played it?

FRANCES [*now in for it*]. As often as I have.

MISS FORBES. And as well?

FRANCES. Folks said you couldn't tell us apart. And here are my notices.

MISS FORBES [*barely glancing at the notices and handing them back*]. Mm! Well, he might possibly get a try-out. — Where do you live?

FRANCES. In the boarding-house — just down the block.

MISS FORBES. Oh, that's the reason you came alone. I was about to tell you, my dear, that you really mustn't go about alone to actors and agencies and managers, even though you are a professional.

FRANCES. Oh, ma'am, I don't. Mother was with me at the agency, but she said it would be all right for me to run across alone to Mr. Northern's. — Everybody knows Mr. Northern's a gentleman.

MISS FORBES. That's very true. — When could your brother come?

FRANCES [*eagerly*]. Right off!

MISS FORBES. You mean he's at home now?

FRANCES. Not 'zactly this minute, but I 'spect he'll be there as soon as I get back.

MISS FORBES. Well, skip along, my child. Mr. Northern is at breakfast. If your brother gets here before he goes out, I think he may see him. Good-bye.

FRANCES [*going to door at left*]. Good-bye!

MISS FORBES. And better luck to the brother!

[*Frances smiles back and exits. As she closes the door, Northern enters from the dining-room.*]

NORTHERN. She gone?

MISS FORBES. Yes, sir; I sent her off as kindly as I could. — But something may come of it — she has a brother.

NORTHERN. A brother, eh?

MISS FORBES. Yes, sir, who's played Fauntleroy — a twin brother. And if he's like her, I'd advise you to give him a once over. She was really a dear child.

NORTHERN. That sounds interesting. — Is he coming?

MISS FORBES. Yes, Mr. Northern. They live only down the block, and I told her to send him right along.

NORTHERN. Well, I'll be here. Got a bit of studying to do. — Oh, by the way, would you mind finishing up in there? The servants simply stop all work to watch me.

MISS FORBES. Not at all. They won't mind me — nor I them.

[*She picks up some letters and the portable typewriter and starts toward the dining-room. The telephone now rings intermittently until Northern answers it.*]

NORTHERN. I'll answer it. — Oh, Miss Forbes, you might get out a contract-form or two in case I need them.

MISS FORBES. Yes, Mr. Northern.

[*She finds them in a filing-case, which is either in the bookcase or on a table at right below the dining-room door, lays them on top of the bookcase or table, and exits.*]

NORTHERN [*who has crossed behind her, comes to the telephone, singing as it continues to ring*]. "I'm coming; I'm coming; and my head is bending low." [*Takes off the receiver.*] Hello! . . . Oh, Blakeney. Yes, yes, the child came. . . . No, I didn't see her. . . . You know, Blakeney, after yesterday you shouldn't have sent her on a wild-goose chase. . . . I don't care if she's played it a thousand times. . . . But,

Blakeney, why didn't you send the boy? . . . Yes, her brother. . . . What's that? . . . Well, the child ought to know! . . . Yes, expect him any minute. . . . Oh, don't worry. . . . If he'll do, you'll get your commission. Good-bye. [*Puts up receiver, and crossing to right, speaks through dining-room door to Miss Forbes.*] That's Blakeney all over. Suppose if I ran across the right lad in Madagascar, he'd maintain it was through him and want his five per cent. [*He picks out one of the sets of "sides," and, pacing up and down stage at right, studies the lines. There is a rap on the door leading to the hall, but Northern doesn't look up.*] Come in!

[*Frances in Fauntleroy costume enters.*]

FRANCES. Mr. Northern?

NORTHERN [*his back is toward her*]. Yes, I'm Mr. Northern.

FRANCES. Good-morning, sir!

NORTHERN. Good-morning. [*Turning about, is pleased at once.*] Oh, you're the little brother from down the block, aren't you?

FRANCES. Yes, sir.

NORTHERN. Well, this is quick work. [*Surveying her.*] All in costume, too. Good idea! Lots of them try that, but they can't all hit it off as you do. — So, you've played Fauntleroy? [*Sitting on top of table, faces her.*]

FRANCES. Yes, sir.

NORTHERN. How many times?

FRANCES. Two weeks in summer stock, sir.

NORTHERN. Say, twenty times then?

FRANCES. Eighteen, yes, sir — six evening and three matinées a week.

NORTHERN [*laughing pleasantly at her accuracy*]. That's right! Nothing like being perfectly truthful. It's rare in the show business. [*Passing behind desk, sits in desk-chair.*]

FRANCES. Yes, sir. And I've brought my pictures and press notices. [*Producing them.*]

NORTHERN [*taking them, gets up and comes to front of desk. Then handing back the clippings and photographs, he sits on the desk again.*] No, laddie, I don't care a rap for press notices — if they're good ones — no, nor for photographs, when I can see the original. — Now, I'll tell you how it is. Sit down, son. [*Frances sits in chair at left, down stage.*] I've set my heart on having a boy play Fauntleroy in my revival — just as Tommy Russell did years ago. [*Northern sits in desk-chair.*] I shall play the Earl myself. And I've most of my people engaged, but I haven't yet found the boy. Do you think your lines would come back as quickly as your costume?

FRANCES [*getting up; brightly*]. Try me, sir.

NORTHERN. That's the way to talk. [*He picks up some letters or mss. from the desk and rising starts toward door at right.*] Well, I can tell in two minutes what you can do — even if you're frightened to death.

FRANCES. Oh, sir, I'm not frightened.

NORTHERN. Quite right again! Excuse me one minute — I'll give Miss Forbes some directions and then we'll have a go at it.

FRANCES [*arresting him with her voice as he crosses, or reaches door*]. Sir?

NORTHERN [*turning*]. Yes?

FRANCES. Can I — I mean, *may* I telephone to my mother?

NORTHERN. Certainly, laddie! Of course!

[*Northern exits to dining-room.*]

FRANCES [*telephoning*]. Hello, Central! Give me Middlesex, 121 . . . Yes, 121 . . . Hello, is that you, mother? . . . He's going to hear me. . . . Yes, he is, . . . Sh! . . . As kind as can be. . . . Can't tell, but he looks smiley.

NORTHERN [*reënters, slapping his left palm with his right hand*]. Well, "to our work alive!" You know that line, laddie?

FRANCES. It's Shakespeare, isn't it, sir?

NORTHERN. That's right! "Julius Cæsar." Now, can you

start right off with your Act II-entrance, where you come to the castle for the first time?

FRANCES. You mean after the cue "Lord Fauntleroy, my lord."

NORTHERN. That's right! The footman enters upper left and announces, "Lord Fauntleroy, my lord." Let's see — you might step out in the hall and come in through that door. And enter, remember, on the "dead cue," so that there's a goodish pause. Suppose you count three, slowly, after the cue. All right?

FRANCES. All right, sir. [*She starts toward door upper left.*]

NORTHERN. One moment!

FRANCES. Sir?

NORTHERN. We'll let Miss Forbes — my secretary — read the footman — shall we?

FRANCES [*fearing Miss Forbes may give her away*]. Oh, sir, I'd rather not.

NORTHERN. Rather not? Nonsense! She isn't an actress. If you don't mind me, you needn't her.

FRANCES [*yielding to fate*]. Just as you say, sir.

NORTHERN [*calling*]. Miss Forbes!

MISS FORBES [*entering from dining-room*]. Yes, Mr. Northern.

NORTHERN. We want your help. — Oh, this is the little brother from down the block.

MISS FORBES [*significantly, as she recognizes Frances*]. Yes, I met your sister. [*Frances holds up a warning finger.*] How much you look alike!

FRANCES. Yes, ma'am, when we played Fauntleroy, folks said you couldn't tell us apart.

NORTHERN [*who has caught none of their by-play*]. Well, Miss Forbes, we're going to let you play the footman.

MISS FORBES. What's that, sir?

NORTHERN. I say, we're going to let you play the footman.

MISS FORBES. Oh, sir, I couldn't do such a thing.

NORTHERN. Oh, I don't mean in the show. — Just this morning.

MISS FORBES. I was wondering if you'd changed your mind about girls in boys' rôles. [*With a glance at Frances.*]

NORTHERN [*laughingly*]. Oh, no danger of that. No, all you've got to do is to come through that door and announce: "Lord Fauntleroy, my lord."

MISS FORBES. Well, I think I *could* do that.

NORTHERN. Yes, I think you could. Wait a minute! Let's make it a dress-rehearsal — shall we?

[*Frances nods and claps her hands.*]

MISS FORBES. Gracious, you don't mean I've got to get into trousers!

NORTHERN. No, no — just Fauntleroy and me — I mean *I* — eh, laddie? Where's that wig of mine?

[*He sits at desk, facing the audience.*]

MISS FORBES [*getting it from the desk*]. Here, sir.

NORTHERN [*he has taken up the hand-mirror*]. Thank you! And the moustache? [*Miss Forbes hands the moustache and spirit-gum. Northern has a chance to work on his moustache during the next few moments. If he has difficulties, he may exclaim: "Confound this new spirit-gum." If finally he cannot make it stick, he may exclaim: "We'll have to let the moustache go." In fact Northern's comments throughout this bit may be ad libitum.*] And my monocle. [*Miss Forbes hands that to him.*] Thanks! Now for a cane. [*As Frances is getting one from the umbrella-stand up left, he speaks sotto voce to Miss Forbes.*] Wish I could look the part as well as the kiddie!

[*He puts the white paint upon his eyebrows and rubs them the wrong way to make them beetle.*]

FRANCES [*bringing a cane*]. This one, sir?

NORTHERN. Thanks! That'll do. — Now the Earl is seated down stage right. [*Sitting in armchair.*] So! — Gouty foot on hassock —— [*Frances brings footstool from near desk and Northern puts left foot upon it.*] So! Well, then, let's go. Clear, please! [*Frances and Miss Forbes go out, left.*] Can you hear me?

MISS FORBES. Yes, Mr. Northern.

FRANCES [*simultaneously with line above*]. Yes, sir.

NORTHERN. Good! Places, please. Now, on, please, Miss Forbes.

MISS FORBES [*entering and standing stiffly, footman-fashion, near door, makes the announcement*]. Lord Fauntleroy, my lord.

NORTHERN [*nodding for her to leave*]. Thank you, Miss Forbes. Very good. [*Miss Forbes crosses behind desk and exits right as Northern counts for Frances.*] One, two, three.

FRANCES [*entering upper left, comes down and shakes hands with Northern right center*]. Are you the Earl? I'm Lord Fauntleroy. I'm glad to see you.

NORTHERN. Glad to see me, are you?

FRANCES. Yes, very. I used to wonder if you would be like my father?

NORTHERN. Am I?

FRANCES. Well, I was very young when he died, but I don't think you are.

NORTHERN. You're disappointed, I suppose?

FRANCES. Oh, no. Any boy would love his grandfather, especially one that had been as kind to him as you have been.

NORTHERN. Oh, I've been kind to you, have I?

FRANCES. Yes; I'm ever so much obliged about Bridget, the apple-woman, and Dick.

NORTHERN. Bridget! Dick! The apple-woman!

FRANCES [*sits in chair down stage left*]. Oh, perhaps you don't know. You see Michael had the fever — Michael's Bridget's husband, and she was in the kitchen crying. And Mr. Havisham said you had given him some money for me and I gave it to Bridget; and that made it all right.

NORTHERN. Oh! that was one of the things you did for yourself. What else?

FRANCES [*clasping one knee*]. Well, there was Dick. He's a perfessional bootblack. He's an old friend of mine. He

gave me this. It's a keepsake. — I take out a gaudy handkerchief there, you know.

NORTHERN. That's right. Now cut to Footman's "Dinner is served, my lord."

FRANCES [*repeating the line reflectively*]. "Dinner is served, my lord." [*Then picking up the cue.*] Would you like me to help you? [*Frances comes down to Northern.*] You can lean on me, you know.

NORTHERN [*getting down his left foot*]. Do you think you could?

FRANCES [*handing Northern the cane*]. I think I could. I'm seven, you know.

NORTHERN [*getting laboriously to his feet*]. Well, you may try. [*He leans heavily on Frances' shoulder.*]

FRANCES [*starting to cross with Northern, simulates staggering under his weight and getting more and more out of breath*]. Just lean on me — don't be afraid of leaning on me — I'm all right — if — if it isn't a very long way.

NORTHERN [*dropping characterization, taking off wig and moustache, rubbing the white paint from his eyebrows, and putting cane by stand, up right*]. Strike!

FRANCES [*eagerly*]. Oh, sir, will I do?

NORTHERN. Do? — Excuse me one moment. [*Going to telephone and taking down receiver.*] Hello! Give me Lennox, 808, please. Yes, 808. [*Picking up the photographs and clippings which Frances during her try-out has left on the desk.*] Don't forget your notices and pictures, laddie. [*He hands them to her.*] Hello! Is that you, Blakeney? This is Northern speaking. . . . Yes, I wanted to tell you, you needn't send any more. . . . What's that? Oh, quite! . . . Don't worry! Pay it myself if necessary. Good-bye! [*Northern hangs up receiver and turns to Frances who is eager between hope and fear.*] "Do," did you say? Listen! What's your mother's telephone number?

FRANCES [*becoming worried as she foresees complications*]. Number?

NORTHERN. Yes, your mother's number, laddie. — By the way, what's your name?

FRANCES. Frances.

NORTHERN. Francis! Francis what?

FRANCES. Oh, Frances Summerhays.

NORTHERN. And the number?

FRANCES. Oh, Middlesex, 121. [*Nervously.*] But couldn't — couldn't I talk with her first?

NORTHERN. Nonsense! Nonsense! Don't get so excited. 'Twill keep. [*Frances has a momentary joy as she thinks she has satisfied Northern, but instantly is in dismay as she listens while Northern telephones.*] Hello! Give me Middlesex, 121, please. . . . Hello! Mrs. Summerhays? . . . This is Mr. Northern speaking. . . . Yes, I wanted to tell you I've tried-out your little boy . . . Yes, the boy, Francis. . . . I beg pardon. . . . One moment — hold the line, please. [*Putting down the receiver, but covering the transmitter.*] Francis!

FRANCES. Sir!

NORTHERN. How do you spell your name?

FRANCES [*hedging*]. My name, sir?

NORTHERN. Yes, your name! How do you spell it?

FRANCES. Oh, S-u-m-m-e-r-h-a-y-s.

NORTHERN [*becoming more and more severe*]. Your first name!

FRANCES. My first name?

NORTHERN. Yes, your first name. [*Commanding.*] Spell it.

FRANCES [*very reluctantly*]. F-r-a-n-c-e-s.

NORTHERN. c-E-s?

FRANCES. Yes, sir.

NORTHERN [*reprovingly*]. Then you're not a boy! Yet you are the laddie — I mean the girl — who was too honest to call eighteen a round twenty!

FRANCES [*almost tearfully*]. Oh, sir, I'm so sorry — so sorry I'm not a boy. I do want to play with you so.

NORTHERN. And you started with a lie!

FRANCES. Oh, no, sir — not exactly.

NORTHERN. Not exactly? What do you mean, not exactly?

FRANCES. Well, sir, I found your secertary thought I had a brother.

NORTHERN. You told her so!

FRANCES. Oh, no, sir! I said if I had a brother, perhaps he could get an audition. And the secertary lady wasn't paying much attention but thought I said I did have one — and then — and then ——

NORTHERN. And then what?

FRANCES. And then I did so want you to try me that when she began asking 'bout my brother, I thought I saw I could really get you to see me. And by and by, I got to thinking this 'maginary brother was myself — almost!

NORTHERN. And you told her that he had played the part as often as you! [*Frances hangs her head in shame and nods.*] And that he was just your age! Twins!

FRANCES. Well, sir, I 'spect I did say something like that. But I won't ever fib again — never, never, never. Oh, Mr. Northern, can't I — I mean *mayn't* I play Fauntleroy with you? Are you going to turn me down?

NORTHERN. Turn you down! Turn you down! One minute! [*Again taking up the receiver.*] Mrs. Summerhays? . . . Sorry to have kept you waiting. Can you come to see me in the next half hour? . . . Thank you! Good-bye. [*Northern puts down the receiver.*] Miss Forbes!

MISS FORBES [*steps inside at right*]. Yes, Mr. Northern.

NORTHERN. Some contracts, please. Frances, wait for your mother. [*Frances runs and throws her arms about Northern, who puts one arm around her, the other on her head. Miss Forbes stands beaming.*]

CURTAIN

AUGUSTUS IN SEARCH OF A FATHER[1]

By HAROLD CHAPIN

CHARACTERS

A NIGHT WATCHMAN: *A stolid, gruff-voiced old man of seventy. Wears corduroys, a heavy greatcoat, and a large, old, bowler hat. His beard and eyebrows are shaggy, but his upper lip is more or less clean-shaven. He speaks slowly and with dense authority.*

AUGUSTUS: *A young man of twenty-seven. Typical Bowery "sport." Dressed in striped jersey, light trousers, very tight-fitting, and a light jacket and waistcoat. Pointed-toed brown boots much the worse for wear, and a narrow-brimmed black bowler hat. He needs a shave, and — though spry — looks very down on his luck.*

A POLICEMAN: *Of the usual type, but suffers from a bump of facetiousness and a desire to be funny.*

TIME AND PLACE: *The corner of a London Square early on a winter's morning.*

The Night Watchman is discovered sitting forward in his shanty smoking a short pipe. As curtain rises the Policeman paces slowly across back from R. *to* L. *and then down pavement* L. *He pauses and looks at shanty, then comes to trestle down* L. *and leans on it and hails the Night Watchman facetiously.*

POLICEMAN. Hullo, you're not dead, then?

WATCHMAN [*looking up*]. Good Gawd, no! Oo's been saying I was?

POLICEMAN. No one. I . . .

[1] Reprinted for class use only by arrangement with Gowans and Gray, Ltd., London and Glasgow. For permission to produce this play, application must be made to Samuel French, 25 West 45th Street, New York City.

WATCHMAN. Do I look ill? I feels all right.

POLICEMAN. It was just my . . .

WATCHMAN. P'raps I was over sound off.

POLICEMAN. It was only my fun.

WATCHMAN [*wondering*]. What was?

POLICEMAN. Oh! About you're being dead.

WATCHMAN. But I ain't.

POLICEMAN [*bitterly*]. No . . . I know you ain't. I never thought you was. You can't see the joke. I was trying to be *funny*, see?

WATCHMAN. Funny? I don't see much fun in that.

POLICEMAN [*retreating*]. Oh, good-night.

WATCHMAN. Blimme, what's up with you? Stop and 'ave a warm.

POLICEMAN. Thanks, don't mind if I do.

WATCHMAN. Then why don't you?

POLICEMAN. I give it up.

[*Enters enclosure by stepping over low end of pole. He leans against shanty which sways.*]

WATCHMAN. 'Ere steady on! Do you want to 'ave me over?

POLICEMAN [*with a return of facetiousness*]. Not to-night, thank you.

WATCHMAN [*quite seriously*]. I shan't be here to-morrow.

POLICEMAN [*after warming hands for a moment in silence*]. Cold.

WATCHMAN. Who?

POLICEMAN [*nonplussed*]. We . . . The weather . . .

WATCHMAN. You speak for yourself. I ain't.

POLICEMAN [*humorously once more*]. Not a crime to feel the cold, is it? [*Pauses for a reply.*] I say I shan't be dismissed the force for mentioning it, shall I? [*Pauses again, still no reply from the Watchman.*] Oh, Lor! [*Changing the subject.*] Rather an uncomfortable sort of place to spend the night, this.

WATCHMAN. I've seen worse.

POLICEMAN [*engagingly*]. I'm sure.

WATCHMAN. 'Ow about 'Ampstead, right facing the 'eath? Or the middle of Waterloo Bridge, with it raining cats and dogs . . .

[*The Policeman starts to make a humorous remark, but thinks better of it. The Watchman regards him severely.*]

WATCHMAN. What say?

POLICEMAN. I was only going to say: . . . "Yes, yes?"

WATCHMAN. Oh! [*Resuming.*] Well, 'ow about them places, eh? Or the top o' the Highgate Harchway? Or 'Obing Viaduck where the road cleaners drench you down every morning reg'ler. Or . . . well, or some place like that? Why this is a nice sheltered locality longside them.

POLICEMAN [*convinced*]. Yes, I can see it must be.

WATCHMAN. Then what did you want to talk such nonsense for?

POLICEMAN. You know you're very hard to get on with, you are really. 'Ere I try to be agreeable and chatty in return for a warm and you snaps me up. I'm 'urt. You can't 'elp 'aving no sense of 'umor, poor chap, but when a . . . a *guest* at your fireside tries to be pleasant and agreeable you've no business to go snappin' of 'im up like this.

[*Watchman laughs gruffly.*]

POLICEMAN. Oh, you see the joke of *that*, do you? Perverted old individual. [*Watchman snores softly.*]

POLICEMAN. Eh? [*Snore repeated.*]

POLICEMAN. 'Ere I say you're a nice sort of watchman, I don't think. I'll make a note of that. "Watchman on drainage job asleep."

WATCHMAN [*quite calmly, without opening his eyes*]. I shall reply that the Policeman on duty mesmerised me with 'is funny little way.

POLICEMAN [*hastily stepping over low pole* R.]. Well, think I'll be saying good-night.

WATCHMAN. Good-night.

POLICEMAN [*by exit down* R.]. Good-night, old Stick-in-the-mud.

WATCHMAN [*coming out of his shelter angrily*]. Look 'ere! Don't you go calling me out of me name!

[*Policeman exits down* R.]

WATCHMAN. Tryin' to be funny. 'E ought to be on the 'alls. I wonder they 'ave 'im in the force.

[*Busies himself with fire.*]

[*Enter Augustus up* R. *He is whistling dolefully but walking fairly briskly to keep warm, hands deep in pockets. He comes down* C. *and stops as he reaches the front of the shelter. The Watchman is just reëntering the shanty and has his back full to Augustus.*]

AUGUSTUS. Gee whiz! You look cozy. Can I have a warm up?

WATCHMAN [*glancing over his shoulder as he pats up sacking on seat inside shelter*]. Why shouldn't you?

AUGUSTUS. And yet again why should I? [*He steps over pole and stands* R. *of fire warming his hands. The Watchman is well out of his sight.*] Cold, ain't it?

WATCHMAN. I feel all right.

AUGUSTUS. Well that's a blessing, anyway. I don't. My what a fire. I haven't felt warm for a month. The dive where I have been dossing is like a refrigerator.

WATCHMAN. Where's that?

AUGUSTUS. Over Edgware Road way, Bell Street, to be exact.

WATCHMAN. Why aren't you there now?

AUGUSTUS. Tariff too high for me. [*Shows pockets.*] Stony, boss, stony.

WATCHMAN. Drink or gambling?

AUGUSTUS. How rude you are! Nothing of the sort. Depression in trade.

WATCHMAN. Trade *is* bad. What do you expect with this government? D'you smoke?

AUGUSTUS [*nodding*]. And chew.

WATCHMAN. Chewin's immoral and ungodly. It's a disgusting vice that's what it is. Have a smoke?

[*Proffers pouch.*]

AUGUSTUS. Eh? Rather. You're a trump.

[*Takes pouch and rolls himself a cigarette, taking papers from jacket pocket.*]

WATCHMAN [*eyeing cigarette papers unfavorably*]. Why don't you smoke a pipe like a Christian?

AUGUSTUS. Haven't got a pipe. [*Lighting up.*] Don't like pipes anyway. Cigs are more sporty. You're as bad as my old dad was. Where's the difference?

WATCHMAN [*laying down the law decidedly*]. Cigs is vice. Pipes isn't.

AUGUSTUS. Oh, rats. [*Hands back pouch.*]

WATCHMAN [*taking pouch and observing Augustus's hand as he does so*]. Blimme, 'ow your 'and shakes. What's up with you?

AUGUSTUS. Guess I'm suffering from a bad attack of nante denarii, sometimes known as gotno spondulico, which is invariably attended with nante monjary, and consequent shakes.

WATCHMAN [*greatly impressed*]. Where do you feel it?

AUGUSTUS. Sinking, 'ollow feeling inside, and a nasty, light headache.

WATCHMAN. Do you mean to say you're 'ungry?

AUGUSTUS. I had some breakfast yesterday.

WATCHMAN. Why didn't you say so afore? [*Bends down and produces from under a seat a paper containing bread and meat which he passes to Augustus.*] D'ye want a knife?

[*Offers a clasp knife.*]

AUGUSTUS. 'Pon my Sam, you're a white man! [*Opens knife and starts eating.*] Bit tricky, eh?

[*Alluding to the difficulties of eating with a clasp knife.*]

WATCHMAN. Ah, it takes some time to get used to it. [*Watches Augustus eating in silence for a moment.*] Let me know if the knife shuts up on your tongue, won't you?

AUGUSTUS [*in surprise*]. Eh?

WATCHMAN. It used to 'ave a narsty 'abit of shuttin' up like. I tightened the screw a bit the other day. One sometimes makes things a bit better by tinkering them about, and sometimes a lot worse.

AUGUSTUS. It works all serene now.

WATCHMAN. I 'aven't 'ad the opportunity of tryin' it — not liking to run any risks of cuttin' meself, you understand. I'm gettin' a bit old to try experiments. Now a young chap such as you 'asn't no cause to bother about a cut lip — they 'eals up all right nine times out o' ten, whereas in any one o' my age a pois'nous wound is a narsty matter.

AUGUSTUS. Very. [*Continues eating.*]

WATCHMAN [*after another pause*]. I suppose you know it's a bad thing to eat so fast — especially when you're 'ungry. You'll be gettin' 'eart-burn.

AUGUSTUS. I'll risk it. Upon my Sam you are a brick, though. If I was the sentimental sort I'd say you was the first — the only one to treat me decent since I've been back.

WATCHMAN. Back? Where from?

AUGUSTUS. States.

WATCHMAN. Meanin' America?

AUGUSTUS [*with mouth full*]. Um.

WATCHMAN. What part? [*Augustus appears not to hear.*]

WATCHMAN. What part of America?

AUGUSTUS. Top left hand corner.

WATCHMAN [*severely*]. Don't be funny. I asked you what part of America you was in.

AUGUSTUS [*hurrying through the information*]. New York mostly — out West, and in 'Frisco a bit, but N'York mostly.

WATCHMAN. What sort of place is it?

AUGUSTUS. A 1. Tip-top. Best ever.

WATCHMAN. 'Ere, no irreverence. What trade was you in?

AUGUSTUS. Trade! Now do I look like a trades-person? I was a pro-fessional.

WATCHMAN. Well, what perfession, then?

AUGUSTUS. I'll give you three guesses.

WATCHMAN. I asked you — I ain't a guesser.

AUGUSTUS. Persistency, thy name is . . .

WATCHMAN. I asked a civil question, I expecks a . . .

AUGUSTUS. A civil answer. I've heard that before. I'll try. [*With exaggerated courtesy.*] I was assistant deputy stamp licker at the White House. Y' see there's so much danger of the Tammany Bosses poisoning Teddy Roosevelt that they have to find galoots with fine constitutions . . . like me . . . to . . .

WATCHMAN [*severely*]. You ain't telling the truth!

AUGUSTUS. Discovered! Did you expect me to!

WATCHMAN [*stolidly*]. I did.

AUGUSTUS. Well you are a lalapaloosa! You deserve it for your faith. I respect an elderly yob. There's something touching about one. I was a sport, see! [*Watchman does not see.*] You know. Did a bit with the gloves. [*Spars at imaginary antagonist. Watchman remains absolutely dense.*] Bunco steerer. Never hear of a bunco steerer? A — a — Oh, lor! a "sport." You know what a "sport" is don't you?

WATCHMAN. Fishin'?

AUGUSTUS. Fishing? Crimy, *No.* A "sport" . . . Oh, poker, poker you know . . . [*Deals imaginary pack of cards.*]

WATCHMAN. Card-sharper?

AUGUSTUS. Only when necessary, but you're getting warmer. Sort of guide, philosopher, and friend to any one who wanted to see life and spend money. I milled a bit too, when I could find a backer.

WATCHMAN [*after a pause*]. I've got a son out there — doing well . . . not your sort at all . . . thank Gawd. Why don't you get work?

AUGUSTUS. Well, y' see it's like this: I'm not the working sort. I'm a "sport" I am. Over in God's country I could always make good, but over here . . . when I tried to arrange a match in the back room of a little pub . . . just a few friendly rounds you understand — the Boss said the Police would do

for his licence. Rot! As if he couldn't have squared 'em. Then I started a poker dive — tip-top, I can tell you . . . but no one came but the cops and *they* didn't lose any money. You're no "sports" here. The only swabs willing to lose money seem to be the foreign waiters, and you have to be a foreigner to get them. Talk about free trade!

WATCHMAN. Bettin's sinful. You're on the road to the pit.

AUGUSTUS. Pit be blowed. I haven't enough for the gallery.

WATCHMAN. You are laughing on the brink of 'ell flame what can't never be quenched, for His mercy endureth for ever. [*Very impressively.*] Amen.

AUGUSTUS. Glad to hear you've done. I wonder you talk to me if I'm such a gnostic, let alone give me grub.

WATCHMAN. Talking can't 'urt me. I've 'ad worse nor you around my fire afore to-night.

AUGUSTUS. Have you now? [*Returning knife.*]

WATCHMAN. You 'eard of the Willesden Wehr-Wolf? Well, 'e was took sittin' as it might be there. That was while I was working in the 'Arrow Road. It was a dark 'ailstormy night, wi' a wind as went through you. 'E comes to my fire just as day was comin' on and 'e says . . . "can I 'ave a warm?" and I says . . . "W'y not?" 'E was soaking wet, and 'e fair steamed aside my fire. Steamed like a kettle 'e did until a cop comes up thinking I was on fire and then they nabbed 'im. 'Orrible, savage lookin' man 'e was. You could fancy 'im drinkin' 'ot blood. 'Ave a drop?

AUGUSTUS [*starts*]. What? [*Sees that the Watchman is proffering can.*] Oh, not for a bit, thanks.

WATCHMAN. It was through me as the Tootin' murderers got 'ung. Ever 'eard o' them?

AUGUSTUS [*sarcastically*]. Old pals of mine.

WATCHMAN. And that young chap as shot 'isself in a 'ansom. Lord De Vees —

AUGUSTUS. Poor old De Vees! We was at Oxford together.

WATCHMAN. Well, 'e 'ad a warm at my fire, and give me 'alf a quid just before 'e done it. I've got it now.

AUGUSTUS. What, ain't you spent it?

WATCHMAN. Spend a half-quid as was given me by a Lord as committed suicide! Don't be silly. I've got it in the glass case with my old father's watch and some shells and things . . .

AUGUSTUS. Shells and things?

WATCHMAN. Lord, yes. I like relics o' the great. You see you ain't nothin' to what I've 'ad around my fire — not yet.

AUGUSTUS [*thoughtfully*]. Thanks. Sounds hopeful for the future. I don't mind 'aving a drink now. [*Takes can and drinks a mouthful — he spits it out again with a wry face.*] Here! What is it?

WATCHMAN. What is it? Why tea!

AUGUSTUS. Stale tea, and cold, too, on a night like this! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. It might have seriously upset me. I haven't tasted tea since . . . [*Pauses suddenly.*] Since Gawd knows when.

WATCHMAN. More used to beer, I suppose.

AUGUSTUS. Wrong, boss. Whisky is my mark. Rye for preff.

WATCHMAN. Strong drink is sinful.

AUGUSTUS. "Strong drink is sinful" . . . "Bettin's sinful" . . . was there anything else you said? . . . Yes b'gosh! "Cigs is vice!"

WATCHMAN. So they is.

AUGUSTUS. Granted, boss, granted. I haven't tasted tea . . . not since. . . . And I hope I never may again. Leastways, not cold.

WATCHMAN. What did you come over 'ere for?

AUGUSTUS. Eh? Oh, one thing and another.

WATCHMAN. Nothin' in particular?

AUGUSTUS. No . . . Yes. [*Seriously and in a different tone.*] To hunt up my father and mother.

WATCHMAN. 'Ave you found 'em?

AUGUSTUS. I don't know.

WATCHMAN. Don't know.

AUGUSTUS. No. I think I have . . . but I'm not sure. And I'm not sure whether 'e'll be pleased to see me.

WATCHMAN. Oh. 'Ad a tiff? You know where 'e is then?

AUGUSTUS. Umhum. I know where I can find him. But I'm not sure whether 'e'll be pleased when I go to him.

WATCHMAN. Course he will. 'E's one o' your sort, I suppose.

AUGUSTUS. Why?

WATCHMAN. Like father like son. That's gospel.

AUGUSTUS [*whimsically*]. Is it?

[*Changes his position restlessly.*]

WATCHMAN. Ain't you tired leanin' about? Fetch yourself that barrer.

AUGUSTUS. Thanks.

[*Steps over fire and places barrow to* L. *of hut and sits in such a way that he is out of sight of the Watchman, but well in the glow of the firelight.*]

WATCHMAN. You're never warm enough there. Move around to the fire.

AUGUSTUS. I'm all right, thanks.

[*A pause, Augustus starts to speak.*]

WATCHMAN. What say?

AUGUSTUS. I was thinking about your boy that you said went out to the States? I wonder if by any chance I might have met him. What was his name?

WATCHMAN. Oh, you wouldn't never 'ave met 'im. 'E was Honest.

AUGUSTUS. That's good. Still you might tell me his name.

WATCHMAN. Augustus Herbert Alfred Moon.

AUGUSTUS [*nodding quietly to himself*]. No, I never met him.

WATCHMAN. Of course not. Went out nine years ago — 'e was eighteen then. Started as a plumber and gasfitter. Doing well by now.

AUGUSTUS. Oh?

WATCHMAN. What might you mean by "Oh"?

AUGUSTUS. How do you know he's doing well?

WATCHMAN. Sure to be.

AUGUSTUS. You haven't heard from him?

WATCHMAN. Not yet.

AUGUSTUS. Not *yet?* Nine years!

WATCHMAN. But then 'e was busy and 'ad 'is way to make. Shouldn't be surprised if he owned a big business by now.

AUGUSTUS. Let's hope so. But suppose he doesn't. Suppose he hasn't got on?

WATCHMAN. Can't suppose such a thing. 'E was Honest.

AUGUSTUS. That does make a difference — in plumbing.

WATCHMAN. It makes all the difference. 'E was Band of 'Ope from a boy, 'e never knew the taste of strong drink, 'e never touched a card. Why 'e was simply bound to get on.

AUGUSTUS. People don't always.

WATCHMAN. 'E 'as.

AUGUSTUS. How about . . . [*Checks himself confusedly.*]

WATCHMAN. Eh? How about what?

AUGUSTUS. Was there a . . . a . . . [*Sees a way to ask the question.*] I mean did any one hear from him?

WATCHMAN. Yes . . . once.

AUGUSTUS. Who?

WATCHMAN [*gruffly*]. Never you mind.

AUGUSTUS. Was it some one you didn't like?

WATCHMAN [*with some heat*]. 'E wrote to some girl 'e'd been walkin' out with, he wrote to her as soon as 'e got ashore. Silly affectionate letter sayin' as 'e was 'omesick.

AUGUSTUS. P'raps he was.

WATCHMAN [*indignantly*]. 'Omesick, with 'is way to make! She said as 'e was engaged to 'er too. Nonsense! I told 'er as 'e'd forgot all about her.

AUGUSTUS. Umhum. I suppose she's forgot all about him, too, long before this.

WATCHMAN. Not she. She still talks about 'im, I'm told.

AUGUSTUS. What! Ain't she married?

WATCHMAN. Girls don't marry so easy in England, my lad. Especially when they chuck away good chances as she's done.

AUGUSTUS [*very earnestly*]. I say, I want to ask you something. Just for the sake of an argument, suppose your boy hasn't got on. Suppose he were to come back, hard up, . . . down on his luck . . . altered from when you knew him. Suppose he'd even been in prison . . .

WATCHMAN [*angrily*]. Are you talking about my Haugustus?

AUGUSTUS. Only for the sake of argument.

[*Policeman enters above square* L. *and crosses behind shanty coming down slowly* R. *of enclosure during dialogue.*]

WATCHMAN. Well, don't. I tells you 'e was bound to get on . . .

AUGUSTUS. 'E might have been unlucky.

WATCHMAN. There's no such thing as luck.

AUGUSTUS. Oh, isn't there? How about an accident?

WATCHMAN. 'E'd 'ave written. 'Is not writing proves . . .

AUGUSTUS. But if he hadn't?

POLICEMAN [*who has been listening*]. Excuse me, my lad, but if you're trying to make old Stick-in-the-mud see a joke, I shall have to call the ambulance for one of you.

WATCHMAN. 'Ullo, Comic Cuts. Tryin' to be funny again?

POLICEMAN. Oh, we are gettin' on. He knows I was tryin' to be funny.

WATCHMAN. This young man wasn't.

AUGUSTUS. No, but I was trying to make him see an argument. I ought to have known it was no good.

POLICEMAN. Why? Do you know old Stick-in-the-mud?

AUGUSTUS. No. How should I?

POLICEMAN. Why shouldn't you? He ain't likely to lead you astray.

WATCHMAN. Funny again.

POLICEMAN. Appreciated at last.

AUGUSTUS [*rising*]. Well, good-night, Boss, and thank you.

WATCHMAN. Sit still. You ain't in no 'urry.

AUGUSTUS. No, . . . but . . .

POLICEMAN. If you want to go off as soon as I comes up, I shall have to keep an eye on you as a suspicious character.

AUGUSTUS. What do you live on? Pins?

POLICEMAN. No. Why?

AUGUSTUS. You're so sharp.

POLICEMAN [*laughing*]. That's good. Now I can always laugh at a joke at me own expense.

AUGUSTUS. I suppose you'll go and crack that to the cook.

POLICEMAN [*surprised*]. Cook? What cook?

AUGUSTUS. It's a joke, Mr. Officer. Cook. Policeman.

WATCHMAN. Bless you, 'e ain't the cook sort. 'E's married.

POLICEMAN. How do you know?

WATCHMAN. You look it. Anxious, hard-worked, get-the-breakfast look about you. Better lookin' P'lice over in America, eh, me lad?

POLICEMAN [*to Augustus*]. Oh, so you're from America? What part?

AUGUSTUS. North-West Territory.

WATCHMAN. Why you told me New York.

AUGUSTUS. I was out West most of the time.

POLICEMAN. Then why tell 'im New York?

AUGUSTUS. You're mighty sharp, aren't you? Because we'd been mentioning New York, and I said I'd been there. If you're so sharp you'll cut yourself.

POLICEMAN. Or somebody else, p'raps. What business might you have been in out there?

AUGUSTUS. I might have been President, but I wasn't.

POLICEMAN. What was you then?

AUGUSTUS. Steward on board train.

WATCHMAN [*stolidly surprised*]. Why you told me something about . . .

AUGUSTUS [*fiercely under his breath to Watchman*]. Shut up, can't you.

WATCHMAN [*in a loud and very hoarse whisper*]. Oh, that's it, is it? Right. Once tip me the wink and I can be as silent as the grave . . . as silent . . .

[*Goes on whispering unintelligibly but loudly and winking to Augustus.*]

POLICEMAN [*startled*]. 'Ullo! What's up with old Stick-in-the-mud? Sounds as if 'e'd swallowed a phonograph.

WATCHMAN [*turning on the Policeman and assuming a bullying tone*]. Never you mind what's the matter with me. You're too inquisitive, see? You want to know too much you do, see? See? [*To Augustus in a knowing whisper.*] That's 'ow I talks to 'im.

POLICEMAN [*amazed*]. Now what's up? You are a rum 'un rounding on a chap like that. I was only askin' a few polite questions. [*To Augustus*]. You don't mind a few friendly questions?

AUGUSTUS [*ill at ease*]. Oh, that's all right.

POLICEMAN. Righto.

[*Holds out hand across pole.*]

AUGUSTUS [*affecting not to notice hand*]. When you came up I was trying to make him see an argument.

WATCHMAN [*stolidly*]. You was trying to make me talk nonsense. My Haugustus, indeed!

AUGUSTUS [*hopelessly*]. Well, I think I'll say good-night once more for the last time. You're a good sort. Bye-bye, officer.

POLICEMAN. Gently. I'm a bit interested in you.

AUGUSTUS. That's nice. [*Starts to move away.*]

POLICEMAN. No, don't go. Please. You're rather like a gentleman I'm lookin' for. Suppose you come along o' me and have a nice warm and a nap at the station. [*Neither he nor Augustus move a step.*] If you ain't 'im no harm's done, and if you do happen to be the gent, how much nicer to be took and done with instead of walking about all night. What do you say?

AUGUSTUS. I say good-night.

POLICEMAN. I thought so.

[*Policeman stoops and runs under pole* L. *into enclosure as Augustus runs out of opening in front of fire and*

off down R. *below square. The Policeman follows closely fumbling for his whistle.*]

WATCHMAN. I 'ad an idea as . . . [*Comes out of enclosure and looks off below square. Whistle heard. Watchman peers into distance. Whistle repeated farther off.*] 'Ullo. 'E can't do it alone. [*Pause.*] I can't 'ardly see 'em. [*Pause.*] They're at the bend. [*Whistle very far off.*] 'Ope to Gawd 'e won't be 'eard. [*Whistle a little nearer.*] 'Ullo! W'y they're . . . [*Goes to upper entrance and looks off.*] Yes they are. [*Whistle considerably closer.*] 'Ere we go round the . . . [*Comes down and reënters enclosure.*] I like to be out of the way. [*Reënters hut.*]

[*Whistle very close to* R. *upper entrance. Reënter Augustus above square* R. *running and out of breath. He makes for exit down* L., *but as he reaches* C. *trips against low end of pole and falls. The Policeman runs on* R. *above square and pounces on him before he can rise, pulling him to his feet by the coat collar. They are in front of enclosure and* R. *of it.*]

AUGUSTUS [*panting*]. All right. You've nailed me. I'll go quiet.

POLICEMAN. Go quiet? You'd better. Let's have a look at you.

[*Holding Augustus by collar and wrist starts him towards fire.*]

AUGUSTUS [*resisting*]. I'll go quiet. Don't . . .

POLICEMAN. Come over to the fire.

AUGUSTUS [*struggling fiercely*]. You don't know my face. You'll be sorry if . . .

POLICEMAN. Why, ain't you pretty?

AUGUSTUS [*angrily*]. You'll come to grief over that funny little way of yours. I'm your man right enough.

POLICEMAN. I want old Stick-in-the-mud to have a look at you.

AUGUSTUS. No. No. [*Struggles fiercely.*]

POLICEMAN. Yes, ducky, yes.

AUGUSTUS. I warn you if you take me in sight of him . . . You can look at me all you like at the Station.

POLICEMAN. Let's look at you now.

AUGUSTUS. I've warned you.

POLICEMAN [*getting him a step*]. You have and thank you . . .

AUGUSTUS. I told you if . . .

[*Breaks off suddenly and ceases to resist.*]

AUGUSTUS. All right. I'll . . .

[*They reach the edge of the firelight. Augustus suddenly bends down and embracing Policeman's knees heaves him over his hip against pole which falls with him. Augustus, released, rushes off down* R. *as before.*]

POLICEMAN [*scrambling to his feet*]. He can't get round. I'll . . .

[*Runs off above square blowing whistle. Augustus immediately reënters over railings.*]

AUGUSTUS. He'll have a nice little scamper. [*Goes up stage and looks cautiously after Policeman. Whistle heard. He crosses behind shanty to exit down* L.] Good-night, boss.

WATCHMAN. Good-night, me lad. Good luck.

AUGUSTUS [*pauses*]. Good luck . . .?

WATCHMAN. Hadn't you better . . .?

AUGUSTUS. Half a mo . . . Your boy . . .

WATCHMAN [*impatiently*]. Good Lord!

AUGUSTUS [*almost pleadingly*]. Is . . . is your wife as sure he's got on? Wouldn't his mother be pleased . . .

WATCHMAN. She's dead.

AUGUSTUS. Dead. I thought mothers waited till their boys came back. Oh, well, good-night.

WATCHMAN. Good-night. Be off. Good luck.

AUGUSTUS [*under his voice*]. Dad.

[*Runs off down* L. *A whistle heard in the distance* R. *The Watchman chuckles gruffly to himself.*]

CURTAIN

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER[1]

By AUGUST von KOTZEBUE

Translated by Beatrice B. Beebe

CHARACTERS

RUNX, *a usurer, who lends for security.*
TIPPEL, *a young, happy-go-lucky student.*
FLIEDERBUSCH, *his friend.*
KONRAD HERZIG, *a watchmaker's apprentice.*
PHILIPPINCHEN, *the watchmaker's daughter.*

SCENE: *A street. At the right, a coffee-house, in front of which are a table and a few chairs. Just across the street is Runx's house, and next to it the abode of Philippinchen. As the curtain rises Tippel and Fliederbusch are seen sitting in front of the coffee-house, drinking coffee and smoking their pipes.*

TIPPEL. Little brother, your coffee tastes fine.

FLIEDERBUSCH. My coffee? Why do you call it mine?

TIPPEL. Naturally. You pay for it.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Are you crazy? Why, you invited me!

TIPPEL. Oh yes, why not? I said, "How would it be if I drank a cup of coffee with you?" Don't you see? "I, with you!"

FLIEDERBUSCH. Don't try to be funny, little brother. I won't pay for the coffee.

TIPPEL. Then who will? I can't.

FLIEDERBUSCH. May I ask the reason why you can't?

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TIPPEL. Oh, I have a number of weighty reasons. For the present, you'll have to put up with just one — I haven't any money!

FLIEDERBUSCH. So, little brother? Then you are in the same position as I.

TIPPEL. Joking aside.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Not a single penny.

TIPPEL. Then what have you done with your last allowance?

FLIEDERBUSCH. Fool! It came when the snow was still on the ground. Just think of all the sleigh-rides that I had to pay out of it.

TIPPEL. So the snow and the money melted away together! You rascal!

FLIEDERBUSCH. So? And have you done any better then? May I inquire where your allowance, which arrived four weeks later than mine, has gone to?

TIPPEL. Show respect! I have shared it with the poor.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Yes. With the poor and lovely maidens!

TIPPEL. And I have paid for a course in æsthetics.

FLIEDERBUSCH. In short, you, as well as I, have thrown your money out on the street.

TIPPEL. "All is vanity," said wise old Solomon. And I wouldn't dare call him a liar. But perhaps you know what the upshot will be?

FLIEDERBUSCH. That the coffee won't be paid for.

TIPPEL. That, and something much worse as well. Oh, little brother, something really terrible! This evening there is the masquerade at Monsieur Prouettonton's. There will be all sorts of dances, oysters, champagne, and beautiful girls ——

FLIEDERBUSCH. I know, I know!

TIPPEL. Without me! Without me! That is a situation my heart refuses to accept. A thought that bathes my eyes in tears!

FLIEDERBUSCH. Stop! Stop! You are not in your æsthetics course now!

TIPPEL. I expected you to say just that. I would enter the temple of Joy by the hand of Friendship.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Strange, little brother, but that is just the way I feel about it.

TIPPEL. I thought that you wouldn't refuse me a couple of louis.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Devil take me if that wasn't my thought, too!

TIPPEL. If worst comes to worst and you have no money, there is still the usurer who loans on security.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Right again. As for me, I thought you could pawn your watch.

TIPPEL. I? My watch? Ha! Ha! Ha! I have had my watch-pocket sewed up for the last six months! But how would it be if you should pawn your superfluous wardrobe?

FLIEDERBUSCH [*looking himself over*]. Little brother, in my wardrobe there is nothing superfluous, unless perhaps it might be the three buttons on the coat pocket — they are at your service. Then I would be entirely safe from pickpockets.

TIPPEL. Now that's a mighty poor joke! We poor children, the sons of misfortune! What are we to do?

FLIEDERBUSCH. Blow the smoke from our pipes and say, *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

[*Enter Konrad with a bundle, ready for travel. He does not notice the others.*]

KONRAD. Now I shall fare forth into the wide, wide world. I must leave my dear little Philippinchen. That will never do! Perhaps the death-watch will soon tick for me. Then they will carry me forth out of a strange city. Then a couple of hired mourners in black cloaks will come along after me, and Philippinchen will never hear that I am dead. Well, dear God, if You have so decreed, I must try and be satisfied. But I know that if I were in Your place, and

had so many mountains full of gold, I would have had a fifty louis d'or piece wander toward poor Konrad Herzig.

FLIEDERBUSCH [*softly, to Tippel*]. Brother, this poor devil is worse off than we are.

KONRAD [*nerving himself*]. Now, there is no alternative.

[*Knocks at the door of Philippinchen's house. She looks out of the window.*]

PHILIPPINCHEN. Is it you, Konrad? I'll be right there.

[*Leaves window.*]

KONRAD. I hear her dear words for the last time — "I'll be right there." Ah, when one really loves a girl it sounds so good when she says, "I'll be right there."

TIPPEL [*softly, to Fliederbusch*]. The fellow is right in that.

PHILIPPINCHEN [*comes to the door*]. Do you really come to say good-bye?

[*Konrad shakes her hand and nods his head.*]

PHILIPPINCHEN. Can't you speak, poor fellow?

[*Konrad shakes his head and dries his eyes.*]

PHILIPPINCHEN. Don't take it so to heart. A couple of years will soon pass by.

KONRAD. So? How then can it be that when I don't see you, a couple of days are so long to me?

PHILIPPINCHEN. I'll be true to you.

KONRAD. Ah — who knows!

PHILIPPINCHEN. Fie, Konrad! Four weeks ago I took communion for the first time. That made me feel wonderful; so pious, so good. There was really not a single evil thought within me. And then I thought, I will be true to my Konrad.

FLIEDERBUSCH [*softly, to Tippel*]. The girl is interesting.

TIPPEL [*softly*]. Devilish interesting!

KONRAD. But how about it when the rich wooers come?

PHILIPPINCHEN. Yes? Well, didn't the rich grocer come just yesterday to woo?

KONRAD [*terrified*]. What's that?

PHILIPPINCHEN. He came with his pipe, just as a neighbor.

He brought father a roll of canister tobacco, and me a whole pound of barley-sugar. Then he sat down and smoked, and always glanced so pleasantly at me when I came in and out. Then he talked at length with father on world politics, but said nothing to me, absolutely nothing. But at last, when he had cleaned out his pipe, he said, "Apropos, neighbor! Give me your daughter for my wife!" I heard it in the kitchen. I was just baking a pancake, and in my fright I let it fall on the coals. After that, they whispered for a long time. I felt just as I did in the last examination I took when I was in the girls' school and my turn was about to come. Father cried, "Philippinchen!" I let him call me three times, but finally I had to go in with my cheeks flaming. Then the grocer rose, pulled his shirt-frill out of his vest, and looked as though he were about to speak, but no sound came. Father acted as spokesman, and I began to cry. When father saw that, he said, "Philippinchen, don't be a fool. I won't compel you. If you have no desire for marriage, make the gentleman a bow and go your way." Then I made a bow to my neighbor, and went my way.

KONRAD. And he?

PHILIPPINCHEN. Well, he finally went on his way, too.

KONRAD. And your father said nothing more about it?

PHILIPPINCHEN. Oh, yes, later he said much more about it; namely, that he had probably received what he deserved; that I was good to you, he knew, and that he had nothing against it; that you were a fine fellow, and an industrious and skilled workman ——

KONRAD. If he thinks so well of me, why won't he give you to me for my wife?

PHILIPPINCHEN. How you talk! Don't you have to become a master? That costs money. And to set up an establishment costs lots of money, too. We have calculated that we would not dare to start with less than two hundred and fifty thaler.

KONRAD. Two hundred and fifty thaler is not everything in the world. If your father only wanted ——

PHILIPPINCHEN. No, Konrad, my good father certainly does what he can. But I have six brothers and sisters, and we live from hand to mouth.

FLIEDERBUSCH [*softly*]. Little brother, I wish with all my soul that all the sleigh-rides could go to the devil, and that I had my money back. [*Tippel nods in assent.*]

KONRAD [*falteringly*]. Well — then — good-bye ——
[*Extends his hand to her.*]

PHILIPPINCHEN. Good-bye, dear Konrad!

KONRAD. Give me just one kiss!

PHILIPPINCHEN. I don't know whether it would be right!

KONRAD. Yes, by heavens, it is right!

PHILIPPINCHEN. Well — if you think —— [*Kisses him in embarrassment.*] Come back again soon!

KONRAD. Ah, Philippinchen, all the watches that I shall make out there in the world will go too fast. I will be always thinking that I can return a bit sooner.

PHILIPPINCHEN. Let me hear from you often. I too, can write, dear Konrad. You didn't know that. I will write letters to you. Father will surely let me do that.

KONRAD. I would like to go in to your father — but I would be sure to whine — you tell him good-bye for me ——

PHILIPPINCHEN. Don't cry, dear Konrad. [*Dries his tears with her apron.*] You make my heart so heavy. Be of good cheer. Now I will go at once to my room and pray. Most sincerely will I pray that you may remain well and come back again soon. [*She herself bursts into tears.*] Farewell! Farewell! [*Exit into the house.*]

KONRAD [*walks to the corner and sobs*]. Yes, farewell, farewell — it is soon said — but how is one to live when the heart is gone from his body?

TIPPEL. Brother, we must help this pair.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Yes, but how?

TIPPEL. I have just been scheming ——

FLIEDERBUSCH. What two hundred and fifty thaler could bring about?

TIPPEL. Certainly.

FLIEDERBUSCH. And yet you could not pay for the coffee, you said just now?

TIPPEL. Oh, I would not marshal my wits to pay for a mere serving of coffee. But such a pretty girl —— If the fellow were not so fine, devil take me if I wouldn't like to have her for myself.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Well, I am curious to see what you propose to do.

TIPPEL. You shall help me.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Gladly.

KONRAD. Courage, Konrad — there is no cure for death — the longer here, the shorter there — it is never otherwise. [*He throws kisses toward Philippinchen's window.*] Adieu! Adieu! [*He is about to leave.*]

TIPPEL. Hey there, good friend! I would like to have a few words with you.

KONRAD. What do you want?

TIPPEL. I? Nothing. But I have just overheard you remarking that you needed two hundred and fifty thaler.

KONRAD. Ah, yes, if I could only find some good man who would lend me that much.

TIPPEL. I would be the good man if I but had the money.

KONRAD. You haven't it?

TIPPEL. Not a groschen.

KONRAD. Well, then, why did you stop me? By now, I could have been out at the gate and could weep undisturbed. [*Is about to leave.*]

TIPPEL. Just wait a minute! Don't you know that a whistling fellow is worth three times as much as a beggar? Take heart, my friend! [*Lays his hand on Konrad's shoulder.*] I will make you a master, and I will come to your wedding.

KONRAD [*doubtfully*]. Don't make sport of a poor devil!

TIPPEL. I like to make sport, but never of a poor devil. If you will just wait here a couple of minutes, upon my honor I will be back at once, and then we will see what is to be done. Come, Fliederbusch, I have something to say to you.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Well, I am certainly curious ——

[*Both exit into coffee-house.*]

KONRAD. Shall I trust him? Or is he making fun of me? If he could do that, it would be bad indeed — Oh well, I might as well wait a little while. Nothing worse can come of it, except that I have to look at the dear house a little longer. In that way the time will pass quickly for me.

[*Tippel and Fliederbusch reënter with a large and very dirty picture.*]

TIPPEL. I really believe the innkeeper wanted to be very formal!

FLIEDERBUSCH. But, little brother, it is still his property.

TIPPEL. Yes, the trash has hung in his house for at least two hundred years, and is already so smoked up that one can scarcely recognize what it represents.

FLIEDERBUSCH. He could have lit a fire with the frame.

TIPPEL. Well, if my plot works out, we will pay a whole thaler for it, and in the future I will not owe any other man for my coffee as I now do him. [*To Konrad.*] Now, good friend, just look at this picture; could you earn fifty louis d'or with it?

KONRAD. Sir, I do not quite understand. But it seems to me that it is not worth three pfennigs.

TIPPEL. Oh, you do not understand art. Now you just go in to your future father-in-law. Stay there patiently for a half hour — perhaps not so long as that. Then — pay attention — I will either call out "Victory!" or I will make my dog howl. In the first instance, come out at once with your bride. But if the dog howls, then you

must take your departure with a good grace, and come out of the door alone.

KONRAD. You seem to me to be a jolly fellow, but you likewise seem to be honest. I do not believe that you would make sport of a poor devil of whom Fate has made a fool. So I will go in for a little while. [*Exit.*]

TIPPEL [*gives the picture to Fliederbusch*]. Now go ahead with your plan. Meanwhile, I will study the rôle I am to play. [*Exit.*]

FLIEDERBUSCH. To work at once.

[*Knocks at the door of Runx's house.*]

RUNX [*at window*]. Who's knocking?

FLIEDERBUSCH. May I have the honor of seeing the honorable Mr. Runx? The refuge of players, the comfort of students, the benefactor of the whole town!

RUNX. Compliments aside — what do you want?

FLIEDERBUSCH. I want to borrow a few thaler on valuable security.

RUNX. We shall see. I'll come down at once.

[*Leaves the window.*]

FLIEDERBUSCH [*to the picture*]. Now, you little Moses, you once struck water out of the dry rocks. See whether you can strike money out of a usurer.

RUNX [*comes out*]. You need a thaler?

FLIEDERBUSCH. Yes, sir. I am a painter, an artist. I do good work, be it said without vanity, and distinguished people many times place orders with me. But they are poor in paying. I always have to wait many months for my money.

RUNX. Yes, yes, it is a miserable, unprofitable art.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Well, to make it short, I have had to paint the Egyptian Darkness for the Superintendent, and I dare claim that it is a masterpiece. It is so dark that one cannot see his hand before his eyes. For it, I was to be paid four louis d'or, which I should have received eight days ago, but I am always put off from one day to another. For

that reason my little money is gone; my wife and children must have something to eat at noon; and I haven't a single groschen.

RUNX. That doesn't concern me in the least.

[*Is about to go in again.*]

FLIEDERBUSCH [*stops him*]. Permit me to say, my most worthy Mr. Runx, it concerns you very much, for I want to borrow a thaler from you.

RUNX. I lend to no artist. Usually they have nothing to pawn but a laurel wreath, of which one can at most use the leaves for soup.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Permit me to say that this afternoon the Superintendent will be sure to pay me in full for my Egyptian Darkness. In three or four hours I will return to you the thaler with any interest you say. Just help me so that my poor children will have something to eat in the meantime.

RUNX. Eh? What? Just get along to the almshouse, and in the future be sure that you bring no poor children into the world, when you are not able to feed them.

FLIEDERBUSCH. But I offer you valuable security.

RUNX. Security? And valuable, into the bargain? I'd like to see it.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Here, sir. Pharaoh's daughter represented just as she found Moses in the little basket on the bank of the Nile. A masterpiece of the famous Raphael. I would not part with it for fifty louis d'or.

RUNX [*puts his spectacles on*]. Let me have a look at it. The thing looks mighty dirty. I wouldn't give fifty groschen for it.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Holy Rubens! What a blasphemy! More than twenty times already I have been offered fifty ducats for it.

RUNX. Then you ought by all means to have sold it.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Heaven forbid! It is my only, my most valuable treasure! I brought it back myself from my

trip to Italy. It is a genuine Raphael, dug out of the ruins of Portici.

RUNX. It looks devilishly ruined, too.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Just look at the beautiful drawing! The noble figure of the princess!

RUNX. She looks like a cattle maid.

FLIEDERBUSCH. The lowland school is like that. But just notice the lifelike coloring.

RUNX. It looks like Nile mud.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Well then, aren't you moved by the diamonds that adorn the crown of the princess?

RUNX. Yes, I would be if they were genuine.

FLIEDERBUSCH. They are genuine! They are from the brush of Raphael!

RUNX. Oh, leave me in peace with your painted diamonds! Such a daub might do at an auction. With me, one must come forth with sterling articles. Recently an author came and wanted to pawn a tragedy. I scolded him. Another time a musician applied to me and wanted to play for me a solo with variations, that I was to keep until he brought my money back! Ha! Ha! Ha! No, old Runx knows his job!

FLIEDERBUSCH. But just one thaler till this afternoon!

RUNX. Not a groschen.

FLIEDERBUSCH. My dear Mr. Runx! A hundred per cent.

RUNX. That sounds well; but you are capable of leaving me with the old daub on my hands.

FLIEDERBUSCH. I, leave my costly treasure in the lurch for one thaler? Eh? You don't know me! Before I would do that, I would bring you a couple of my children!

RUNX. Yes, and then I would be beautifully repaid!

FLIEDERBUSCH. Don't worry. At exactly four o'clock you will have your money again. And — if you want to be painted in green or blue, I will do it for nothing.

RUNX. Listen, sir. Something has just occurred to me. Standing there in my yard, I have a fat Venus made of

sandstone. It is an heirloom. For a long time I have wanted to have it painted red, with blue eyes, but it costs too much. If you, as an honorable man, will promise to bring me back my thaler doubled, and will paint my fat Venus free of charge, then I will help you this time in your need.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Agreed, Mr. Runx. What won't a man do for his starving children!

RUNX. Well then, see! Here is a bright thaler. Keep God in mind and don't deceive me.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Thank you, thank you. Here is the Raphael — But for God's sake take good care of it! If the least harm were to come to it, there would be a terrible suit over it. [*Exit.*]

RUNX [*regarding the picture*]. Well, well, anyway I haven't lost much on the old thing. Pharaoh's daughter! I wouldn't give her to my cook. And little Moses looks just like a young porpoise. The fellow hasn't put any life into the picture. But thus are the so-called artists — queer folk! I have noticed it every now and then at auctions. Perhaps a Rembrandt, or whatever the fellow calls it. It's only a dark daubing. One can't recognize a single line. And yet they bid it in at random as if it were old silver that could be melted down. In the end, it sometimes happens that the thing is really a costly relic ——

[*Tippel comes in, humming and looking through a lorgnette. When he sees the picture, as if unconsciously, he appears to be startled.*]

TIPPEL. What do I see? Sir! What do I see?

RUNX. You see little Moses with Pharaoh's daughter.

TIPPEL. Good God! It is a Raphael!

RUNX. Yes, yes, I believe the poor wretch called it that.

TIPPEL. A Raphael! An original! What luck! What fortune! I am beside myself with joy!

RUNX [*aside*]. Is the fellow crazy?

TIPPEL. Sir, is the painting your property?

RUNX. Yes, so *vel quasi.*

TIPPEL. Let me have it! I will pay you well.

RUNX [*aside*]. Well, well, the painter didn't deceive me. [*Aloud.*] Yes, sir, I will let you have it. But ——

TIPPEL. But it is valuable, you are going to say? It's no matter. I am a traveler, an Englishman, who is touring Europe for the purpose of collecting art treasures. At great cost I have already assembled many very interesting things. But a Raphael! Such a Raphael! I haven't one of them. Name your price, my charming friend, name your price.

RUNX [*aside*]. Oh, the devil! [*Aloud.*] Yes, if I only ——

TIPPEL. Will you take fifty louis d'or? I will pay you on the spot ——

RUNX [*aside*]. The deuce! [*Aloud.*] The picture does not really belong to me. It has only been left in my care.

TIPPEL. Where is the lucky owner? I must see him, talk with him, embrace him, bind him with gold ——

RUNX [*aside*]. He's in an awful hurry! [*Aloud.*] I'll tell you, my dear Englishman, I will talk with the owner ——

TIPPEL. But soon, at once! I am burning with curiosity!

RUNX. You see, it is a very valuable painting. And so far as I know, the owner himself has set a high price on it.

TIPPEL. He shall command. Only — at once.

RUNX. The drawing is of the lowland school, and the coloring of the Italian. Between ourselves, the diamonds on the princess are alone worth fifty louis d'or.

TIPPEL. Certainly! Certainly!

RUNX. Therefore, I ask of you to state clearly just how much I may bid.

TIPPEL. Listen, friend, I am a rich lord. I have estates in Calcutta that bring me in a half million. Paintings are my hobby; and if you can get me this for one hundred pounds sterling, you shall earn for your commission as agent another fifty louis d'or.

RUNX. Ah, your Excellency, I ask you to consider: such a valuable painting! A hundred pounds sterling is no price for it.

TIPPEL. Well, well, ten pounds more or less matters little to me.

RUNX. I will see what can be done. I'll bring an answer to your Excellency this afternoon between four and five o'clock.

TIPPEL. An eternity for an amateur as I am! But what is one to do? One must have patience! Well, sir, I am stopping yonder at The Golden Monkey. The four coaches that you see standing in front of the door, all belong to me. I have sent the pack-wagons on ahead. When you come, just ask for Lord Pittle's valet. If the valet is not at hand just then, you can send in your name by one of my equerries. If you bring me the picture, I will receive you with a bowl of such punch as you have never drunk in Germany. And I will show you a painting by the famous Quitschiwatschi! You are a great connoisseur; but this will make you open your eyes! And I got it for a mere bagatelle, three thousand thaler. But that is just between you and me. Adieu, sir, I will await you ——

[*Exit.*]

RUNX. The fellow is mad! Three thousand thaler for a Quitschiwatschi! Now I must strike while the iron is hot. The stupid thing that I am! If I had only asked the painter where he lived! If I could only bring the bargain to a conclusion now! Then I would make a fine profit, even if it was illicit. But till this afternoon —— Such gentlemen often change their minds. . . . What do I see? There he comes as if I had called him.

[*Enter Fliederbusch.*]

FLIEDERBUSCH. It's a good thing that I find you still here. The Superintendent is a fine man! When I went home, I found the money for my Egyptian Darkness already

lying on the table. So I am bringing you back the thaler, and in gratitude gladly put another with it.

RUNX. God forbid! Who would be so unchristianlike as to take interest for a quarter of an hour? You are welcome, without any interest.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Well, I thank you, and I wish that so often as you lend anything from your soul, that the devil may also exact no interest from you.

RUNX. Ha! Ha! Ha! You are a droll customer!

FLIEDERBUSCH. Give me my picture, and then farewell.

RUNX [*holding fast to the picture*]. Just listen! While you were gone, I have been taking something under consideration. In my youth — ah — then I also was a connoisseur! And a great amateur! The devil knew, I believe, that the hobby was again awaking in me. It is a Raphael! It is really a beautiful Raphael!

FLIEDERBUSCH. Isn't it?

RUNX. The foliage might be by Rubens, but the figures are certainly by Raphael. You see that I understand it well.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Yes, yes, I see that.

RUNX. Well, how would it be if you were to let me have the picture? I will pay you well for it.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Oh, I wouldn't sell it for any amount of money.

RUNX. But if I gave you ten louis d'or? How about it? That tempts you, doesn't it?

FLIEDERBUSCH. Heaven forbid! What are you thinking of? Ten louis d'or for an original by Raphael?

RUNX. Well, it certainly isn't worth more than twenty ——

FLIEDERBUSCH. Just between brothers, it's worth a thousand ducats.

RUNX. The devil! If I were to decide to offer forty louis d'or, I would be paying dearly for it.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Listen, my charming Mr. Runx, if I were a wealthy man, you could not have it for any amount. But since I am a poor devil, and have six poor little devils

hopping about me, you can have the picture for one hundred louis d'or.

RUNX. A hundred? There would be nothing to gain in that.

FLIEDERBUSCH. You intend to profit by it? Oh, then you can't have it. I thought you were a connoisseur, an amateur.

RUNX. Yes, yes, I am. And now I am such a fool as to be so infatuated with the picture that I am ready to give fifty louis d'or for it. But not a penny more!

FLIEDERBUSCH [*aside*]. That would help the poor fellow, but how about the coffee and the masquerade?

RUNX. Well, what are you mumbling about?

FLIEDERBUSCH. I was just making a rough calculation. The money would certainly be welcome to me. Will it be cash?

RUNX. Cash; ready money; in unclipped gold.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Then hear my last word on the subject: fifty-five louis d'or, and if you are not willing to give that, then I will take my picture home. [*Reaches for the picture.*]

RUNX. Stop! Stop! You can certainly let a fellow consider for a few minutes. We're not bargaining here for fifty-five potatoes.

FLIEDERBUSCH. But quickly, before I repent ——

RUNX. Now, listen. Since the little Moses smiles so charmingly at me, perhaps it is all right ——

FLIEDERBUSCH. The thought of separation from the worthy daughter of Pharaoh is painful to me.

RUNX. Oh, what am I to do? Of course, it is only a painted princess. But I must part with real money!

[*Reaches into his pocket.*]

FLIEDERBUSCH. It all depends on you. If you ——

RUNX. No, no, a bargain is a bargain. There is a roll of fifty louis d'or, and here are the five extra.

FLIEDERBUSCH. Correct. [*To the picture.*] So I must say farewell, noble princess!

RUNX. Yes, in heaven's name, do so. For you will not

see her again very soon. Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha! [*Aside.*] Now the lord shall pay me. [*Aloud.*] Adieu, friend artist. My regards to the poor little children.

[*Fliederbusch is about to go.*]

FLIEDERBUSCH. Where are you going with the picture? Aren't you going to take it into your house?

RUNX. I just want to get a new and expensive frame for it. Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! [*Exit.*]

FLIEDERBUSCH. Ha! Ha! Ha! You are going to be surprised. There is a very especial charm in the joy of cheating a rogue.

[*Enter Tippel, who moves up quietly.*]

TIPPEL. Is it done?

FLIEDERBUSCH. Done! Here are the fifty louis d'or.

TIPPEL. Bravo! Bravo!

FLIEDERBUSCH. And here are five *pro studio et labore.*

TIPPEL [*annoyed*]. Why that?

FLIEDERBUSCH. Little brother, we must pay the innkeeper for the coffee, and this evening we must go to the masquerade.

TIPPEL. Yes, of course. But still, it would have been better if we had received nothing for ourselves. [*Turns towards Philippinchen's home.*] Victory! Victory!

[*Enter Konrad and Philippinchen.*]

KONRAD. How, gentlemen, is it true? The dog didn't howl? And I do not have to go forth out of the gate?

TIPPEL. There, children, there. But you must remember to ask me to stand sponsor.

PHILIPPINCHEN. Ah, sir, you surely are a rich prince, aren't you?

TIPPEL. Neither, my dear child. It would be too bad if one had to be either rich or a prince to make some one else happy!

KONRAD. Yes, truly happy! You can see it in my eyes, and

my gratitude is there, too. At the present time I cannot give you more than that.

TIPPEL. Even that is too much.

PHILIPPINCHEN [*is about to kiss his hand*]. God grant you all good, worthy sir!

TIPPEL. Fie! who would allow his hand to be kissed by such a beautiful girl? If you had asked a kiss of me — but no, I will not now — and I trust I will not in the future. Then I would be of as little good as Mr. Runx. Go, children, get your father's blessing. And when you, dear girl, are to bake the good pancake in honor of your betrothal, then invite me as your guest. I will bring the wine.

PHILIPPINCHEN. Come, Konrad, I am very dizzy. We will ask the pancake for his blessing, and bake father in the finest butter —— [*She draws Konrad into the house.*]

TIPPEL [*weighing the rest of the money in his hand*]. Shall we spend this to-day?

FLIEDERBUSCH. We certainly will.

TIPPEL. And what will we have to-morrow?

FLIEDERBUSCH. Nothing, little brother, nothing at all.

Whate'er the gods give to us on the morrow,
My soul, dear brother, that is still mine!
Who, then, shall take thought for to-morrow?
To-day I am rich and happy and fine.
He who makes happy a noble pair,
And then can wish for aught, as well,
Oh, even if robed in purple fair,
He's not a man, I'm here to tell!

CURTAIN

THE THRICE PROMISED BRIDE[1]

A MODERN CHINESE PLAY

By CHENG-CHIN HSIUNG

CHARACTERS

Wang Ta-Ming, *the Magistrate.*
Tuan Chai, *his Secretary.*
Chung Ting, *the Knight.*
Li Che-Fu, *the Wealthy Merchant.*
Wang Mei-Pao, *the First Match-Maker.*
Han Chu-Yin, *the Bride.*
The Bride's Mother.
Chien-Shou, *an Old Man.*
Tu Kuang-Yang, *the Beggar-Scholar.*
Liu Ma, *the Second Match-Maker.*
Attendants, Musicians, etc.

Time: *Long ago; many years before China became a republic.*
Place: *The Magistrate's Court in an interior district in Ho-Nan Province, China.*

The rise of the curtain, if a proscenium curtain is used, discloses a Chinese stage. There are two doors in the rear wall; the left for entrance, the right for exit. At each door there must be a curtain exquisitely embroidered with threads of gold and bright-colored silk; on the left door curtain the figure of a dragon, and on the right, the figure of a phœnix. In the center there is a table. The audience cannot see

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the table legs, for the table is curtained with a rich tapestry on which the figure of a unicorn is embroidered. . . .

To the right of the table is a chair where The Secretary is to sit. Behind the table is the chair for The Magistrate. On the center wall we may have a picture of the God of the Theater. But, lest The Magistrate should duplicate or intercept the picture, we had better have a painting of pear trees instead, under which the first Chinese actors are supposed to have practiced the histrionic arts. There is no other furniture on the stage. . . .

We shall not introduce the property-man, since he is obtrusive to some sophisticated Chinese dramatists and to all the uninitiated Western playgoers.

Music we must have. To avoid the overwhelming din of a Chinese orchestra we will invest the power of music in a single Maker-of-Sound, behind the scene.

With the overture, in which a variety of instruments are used, the left door curtain is raised, and The Magistrate majestically enters with his attendants, one in front and one behind him. He has more than two attendants, but we must make imaginary puissance. He pauses before the door for a moment; then he walks gracefully down stage. He strikes with both hands his mandarin gauze hat to pay a public homage to the emperor and to wish secretly for a promotion to higher rank. Slowly he straightens the lateral appendages of the official bonnet. (These are not in the form of the Manchurian peacock feather, but in the shape of the wings of a bat, symbolizing happiness.) Carefully he makes sure of the clasp of his stiff belt, which is beautifully decorated. Augustly he smooths his imperial robe, displaying the gorgeous colors and designs of his costume.

When the audience has had enough of his front elevation, he turns, and with pompous strides proceeds to the center of the stage to exhibit his profile. He waves, sweeps, and shakes his large and long sleeves to show that he has nothing there. Solemnly he walks up stage to show his gorgeously em-

broidered back to the audience; and then he "ascends" the dedicated chair. When the applause has abated, he tells his story.

THE MAGISTRATE. My humble name is Wang Ta-Ming, the magistrate of this Yen-Ling District of the Province of Ho-Nan. I was born in the Hain-Kien District of the Province of Kiangsi, of scholarly parents. At the age of eighteen moons, my mother taught me to write with a reed in the sand. When I was yet wearing my hair like the tentacles of an octopus, I studied the Four Books and the Five Classics. At the age of fifteen years, I passed my first examination and won the degree of Blooming Talent. In my second decadal anniversary, I was honored with the degree of Raised Man. The next leap year bestowed on me the rank of Entered Scholar. As a reward for my literary distinction, I was appointed the magistrate of this district. I hastened to this post that I might glorify my family name. I am watched by a thousand eyes and listened to by a thousand ears, for there is always an attentive audience within these four walls. It makes me shudder to think of the important duties I have to perform. Attendants!

[*The audience's attention is directed to the attendants, who have been standing on each side of the table. They are dressed alike. They wear thin, flat-soled shoes but make up in height by their tapering felt hats. Their costumes are of plain silk, painted with the emblem of the district court. When not employed, each leans on his bamboo stave, a much abused symbol of justice.*]

ATTENDANTS. At your service, Your Honor.

THE MAGISTRATE. Call Mr. Secretary Tuan Chai!

[*The First Attendant goes out and returns immediately with The Secretary, dressed as an old gentleman with a heavy mustache, who is ready to give the young*

officer his experience and opinion when needed. He carries a fan.]

THE SECRETARY. What is your honorable wish?

THE MAGISTRATE. Have you any invention concerning the case of the interrupted wedding?

THE SECRETARY. I have found the match-maker, Sir. It is time the plaintiff, Chung Ting, and the defendant, Li Che-Fu, be here.

THE MAGISTRATE. Strike the gong and open the court!

[*The gong sounds behind the stage. The attendants pull open the imaginary doors. The Chinese drama demands that acting create scenery rather than vice versa. The people who are yet to enter must orient themselves first, walk and step to suggest to the mind of the audience, doors and steps. The military man enters briskly with accompaniment of martial music. He is dressed in the costume of an ancient Chinese Knight, beautifully embroidered mantle, plumed bonnet, close-fitting uniform, a sword, and trim, embroidered boots. He bows to The Magistrate but does not kneel.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Are you Chung Ting, the plaintiff?

CHUNG TING. Yes, Sir, newly returned from my military career.

THE MAGISTRATE. What can you do besides disbanding the wedding procession of Li Che-Fu?

CHUNG TING. I can shoot with a three hundred-pound bow and pierce a half-inch willow leaf one hundred steps away. I can separate and pacify two fighting bulls. However, I did not expect to win a wife by sheer force, but by a prior claim.

THE MAGISTRATE. Why didn't you claim the maiden's hand until she was carried in the sedan chair to her new home?

CHUNG TING. I had taken my military examination in the capital and was serving His Majesty and our country by defending the northern borders against the barbaric tribes, so I have not been able to plan to establish my own family.

THE MAGISTRATE. You didn't know your fiancée was to be married to Li Che-Fu until the wedding day?

CHUNG TING. Not until I came back with my title and my plumes and my sword.

THE MAGISTRATE. [*He takes a warrant stick and gives it to the First Attendant.*] Bring the defendant Li Che-Fu!

[*The First Attendant goes out and returns presently with The Rich Merchant. Gay music accompanies the entrance. The Rich Merchant is a man of about thirty years. His costume surpasses The Magistrate's in richness. Like Tuan Chai, he may not use the design of dragons and clouds, but he may use the bat motif, or better, the ancient-coin motif. He wears jeweled Chinese shoes. He walks pompously into the court. As soon as he sees The Magistrate, he kneels. There is no property-man to assist him; such privilege is granted only to an important personage or to a famous actor. An ordinary actor is expected to take care of his costume, however cumbersome and costly. The property-man is ubiquitously watching to see that the costumes are properly displayed, and not in the actor's way. Handling any property attracts the audience's attention and spurs the audience's imagination, often to the neglect of the actor. The costume is to be admired as it is worn, much like the long train formerly worn by the Western hostess. The wearer would consider any meddling on the part of another as a kind favor, or as an insult. Thus, comfortably, and without assistance, The Wealthy Merchant prostrates himself.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Li Che-Fu, did you know this man Chung Ting?

LI CHE-FU. Not until he collided with my bridal chair, Your Honor.

THE MAGISTRATE. Did you know he was the first betrothed to the maiden of the Han family?

LI CHE-FU [*hesitating*]. N——

THE MAGISTRATE [*warningly*]. The truth, or the bamboo.

[*The Attendants stand erect and threaten Li Che-Fu by tapping the table sides alternately with their bamboo staves.*]

LI CHE-FU [*looks at The Secretary for advice. Tuan Chai, who has been bribed, nods his head*]. I heard that my bride, Han-Chu-Yin, had been promised to a person before either was born. The family of the boy moved away to the region bordering the barbaric tribes and was never heard of for twice eight years. My marriage was negotiated under the six ceremonies. All the village was invited to my feast. My match-maker alone will establish the evidence.

[*Tuan Chai nods repeatedly and whispers to The Magistrate behind his spread fan.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Bring the match-maker!

[*The First Attendant goes out and returns with The Match-maker. The Match-maker is often the fool or the clown in the Chinese plays. She (it might just as well be he) defies conventions, customs, all the reality and realism in the Empire and all the traditions of the world save that of the Chinese stage. She may be streak-faced and grotesquely costumed. No Chinese playwright describes this figure definitely, but grants the character all the license and the gagging which perfect or spoil the play according to which way you take it. During the clownish entrance, humorous music.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Are you Match-maker Wang Mei-Pao by name?

WANG MEI-PAO. By profession, mister. Are you unmarried? Do you want me?

THE MAGISTRATE. Neither yourself nor your service, but your account of the families of these people.

WANG MEI-PAO. My account, to be sure. I can make the

ignorant learned; the ugly beautiful; the blind see; the deaf hear; the shrew tame; in a word, poverty, riches; misery, happiness; and earth, heaven. [*The Magistrate is nonplussed.*] And they all seem to believe me. They drink to my health and lift the stuff to the level of their eyebrows and live together contentedly, and harmoniously as the proverbial harp and lyre. [*The Magistrate murmurs as if not knowing what to do with her.*] Of course, if your first match is not so supremely perfect as you wish, you can depend upon me for concubines.

THE MAGISTRATE. Did you try to tie your blind and aimless cords around this merchant Li and the maiden of the Han family?

WANG MEI-PAO. Yes, Sir, a heaven-made match. Their ingots of gold total the same figure; the gates of the two houses cope with one another. A perfect equation withal!

THE MAGISTRATE. That is enough, you may go home.

WANG MEI-PAO. [*She walks reluctantly to the right, where the retiring character may say the last word.*] I live next door to the house of Everybody. Don't forget to send for me when you want to augment your family; for I know all the superb marriageable maidens in the whole district. [*She goes out.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Bring the Han family in!

[*The First Attendant goes out and returns directly with Han Chu-Yin and her mother. The women walk down stage, between the two flags which are painted on the outside to suggest the wheel of a carriage, and are carried by supernumeraries. The supers withdraw as the women walk to the center of the stage with an accompaniment of slow and soft music, but not with mincing steps, for foot-binding has never been universal in China. It is superfluous to comment on their costumes. They are just beautiful. The designs for the young woman's costume are gay flowers and aquatic grasses of a smaller and more exquisite pattern.*

The young woman is about eighteen years old. The mother is old enough to require the rôle of "Lao-Tan" (the married woman's part). Like the men without a title, all women must kneel before The Magistrate. In a district court or in a theater there are always enough cushions for that purpose. The women bow down low.]

THE MAGISTRATE. Face toward the north!

[*The women face him. While he is looking at the young beauty, music expressing magnetic enchantment is played. The bashful woman turns her face from The Magistrate toward the audience.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. The looks that destroy cities, the looks that destroy kingdoms! Small wonder you men quarrel with each other. Are you Han Chu-Yin, formerly promised to Chung Ting and now being borne to the house of Li Che-Fu?

[*The young woman is so shy that she can hardly hold her head up or make an answer.*]

THE MOTHER. Yes, my Lord, if she is nothing else.

THE MAGISTRATE. And you, her mother?

THE MOTHER. Yes, my Lord, her only living parent.

THE MAGISTRATE. Why did you intend marrying your daughter to the Li family while there was yet an engagement contract standing between the family of Han and the family of Chung?

THE MOTHER. Because we thought the Chung boy sacrificed himself for His Majesty, and my dear little Chu-Yin was past her peach-blooming age.

THE MAGISTRATE. You may not marry your daughter to two men. [*Softly.*] I do pity your daughter. No ceremony has yet been completed. Whom do you prefer?

THE MOTHER. I will marry ——

LI CHE-FU. I offer you my golden ingots.

CHUNG TING [*advancing*]. I have my silvery horses.

LI CHE-FU. I have built my red mansion.

CHUNG TING. I have won my scarlet jacket.

LI CHE-FU. My calculation always bears fruit.

CHUNG TING. My arrows always hit the bull's-eye.

THE MOTHER. What say you to these genteels, my dear Little Chu-Yin?

HAN CHU-YIN. A maiden has no lips, but heart.

THE MOTHER. Well, whom does your heart yearn to choose?

HAN CHU-YIN. I may neither choose whom I like nor refuse whom I dislike. I do as my parent decides.

THE MOTHER. The parent should be wiser, but I am not. [*To The Magistrate.*] Your honor is the parent of the people. Graciously decide this according to your honorable will.

THE MAGISTRATE. I am not old enough to be the maiden's parent, though my intention toward her is good. [*To the men.*] You deserve —— [*Chung Ting takes a step towards The Magistrate; Li Che-Fu straightens himself from his knees up. The Secretary, who you remember has been bribed, whispers to The Magistrate behind his fan.*] Chung Ting, you deserve *not* to wed this maiden after you have neglected her till her full-plum period. [*Tuan Chai grins.*]

LI CHE-FU. A Kao-Yao to the judgment!

THE MAGISTRATE. And you, Li Che-Fu, scarcely deserve to wed this maiden who might be claimed by a more worthy and younger man.

[*Both Tuan Chai and Li Che-Fu are disappointed and downcast. Tuan Chai, the secretary, again whispers behind his fan. The Magistrate pays no attention.*]

THE MOTHER. But what are we to do with my daughter who is in her prime-plum period?

THE MAGISTRATE. I know what to do with your daughter. You just wait ——

[*Tuan Chai motions with his hands to Li Che-Fu and extends his six fingers — meaning the six ceremonies.*]

LI CHE-FU. But the six ceremonies, and the match-maker!

THE MAGISTRATE. She confessed herself that she could make anything out of nothing. Besides, the maiden has not entered the threshold of your house.

CHUNG TING. Sir, *I* have a reliable witness. He is a very *old* man. He was witness to the verbal agreement between her father and mine. It's time he should be here.

[*The Old Man enters feebly. He is old enough to use a stick — even in a district court. His robes are embroidered with symbols of longevity. He wears a long white beard, not hanging from the chin, but from the upper lip and the jaws. Perhaps the flowing beard has been used to cover up the bad teeth — if there are any — should the character open his mouth to sing. Or maybe it is to save the trouble of make-up in extending the wrinkles to the lower quarter of the face. Anyway it is very convenient to hang up this beard at the last moment so that the player can drink tea, eat refreshments, and smoke a water pipe in the green-room until his call. Our Old Man has to speak through such a heavy beard.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Who are you?

THE OLD MAN. I am Chien Shou, friend to Huan Chung and Fuan Han.

THE MAGISTRATE. Are you a go-between?

THE OLD MAN. Not exactly.

THE MAGISTRATE. By the hoary locks on your head I conjure you to speak the truth.

THE OLD MAN. Precisely. It was because of *my old age* that my two friends appointed me to be the witness to their gentlemen's agreement. One asked me to be the Fairy-Below-the-Ice, the other the Aged-Person-Under-the-Moon; namely, a formal match-maker. Said the parents-to-be to one another: "If our children be both girls, sister them; if they be both boys, brother them; if they be of opposite sex, espouse them." And I was the only witness beside the two babes that were yet in their first nine months

of infancy and whom you see now here as grown-up children.

THE MAGISTRATE. Was there any document? Were any betrothal gifts exchanged?

THE OLD MAN. Nothing but their word of honor.

THE MAGISTRATE. That is scarcely valid.

THE OLD MAN. But it is negotiable. By my threescore and ten years I crave the law.

THE MAGISTRATE. Old man, do you gain anything by this union?

THE OLD MAN. Yes, the fulfilled trust of my deceased friends. The marriage was upon even their dying lips.

THE MAGISTRATE. The law is for the living.

CHUNG TING. Here I am; I, too, crave the law.

THE OLD MAN. And I am still alive, and hale and hearty.

[*The Magistrate looks inquiringly at the women.*]

THE MOTHER. The old man speaks the gospel truth through that heavy beard.

HAN CHU-YIN. O, Unkind Time, that the vase of my soul be the gossip of the court! I would rather seek the Other World.

TUAN CHAI. Sir, this is a very difficult case. We should see everybody get his just reward according to law.

CHUNG TING. Justice!

LI CHE-FU. The law!

THE MOTHER. Give my daughter of the four virtues a husband. Beget me a grandson!

THE MAGISTRATE. I told you to wait until ——

[*Just at this moment The Scholar enters. He is not the God of the Machine, but a beggar, half dreaming, half starving. Still he has a princely bearing. His scholarly headwear is awry; his shoes have perfectly lovely tops but only half soles. His gentleman-beggar coat is all patched but made up of the most elegant silks and intricate patterns, like the frostings on a frozen window-pane. There is no hole in any part of the theatrical attire, though the outfit may have*

lasted the company several generations. The Scholar haughtily walks down stage, surveys the imaginary doors, steps in, goes clear to the right, makes the motion of seizing something, and strikes the imaginary drum on high. The drum sounds behind the stage.]

THE SECOND ATTENDANT [*who may have retired and be on the job just now. Unlike The First Attendant, he sulks through his duties*]. Hey, you, why do you drum the drum of justice? What wrong have you suffered?

[*The Scholar does not speak but hands a scroll of paper to The Second Attendant, who spreads it from left to right. The Scholar twists the paper so the right side is up. The Second Attendant extends his lazy palm to ask for wine-money — an institution, like opium smoking, the Chinese dramatist wishes to slight. The Scholar turns his purse inside out, revealing nothing but an old book. He beats again the imaginary drum, emitting a louder sound. The First Attendant comes to them, pushes away The Second Attendant, snatches the paper, and takes it to The Magistrate, who reads it in about the same short time.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Kao-Yao be praised! Still another disputant! [*To The Scholar.*] Tu Kuang-Yang, do *you* claim the hand of this maiden? [*Everybody is startled except the girl, Han Chu-Yin, who seems to be pleased. The Scholar nods his head.*] Who is your match-maker?

[*The Scholar goes out and returns with The Second Match-maker. Without a match-maker a Chinese match does not strike aright. On the Chinese stage, The First Match-maker would also play the part of The Second Match-maker without even the outward pretense of different make-up and costumes. To furnish variety, however, we will make The Second Match-maker old, old enough to think everything aloud in Chinese maxims. She is dressed in un-*

couth apparel. Much of her character and her gagging are left to the producer and the player, for even the standard acting version should not be long.]

THE SECOND MATCH-MAKER. I thought some nobler and more affluent person than you would want my service. [*Seeing The Magistrate and imitating his bearing.*] Oh, my Lord is handsome, clever, and young! Are you contemplating furnishing another golden mansion? I know the dwellers of any red chamber.

THE MAGISTRATE. Do you know this young man and this young maiden?

THE SECOND MATCH-MAKER. Yes, since they were weaned. They went to the primary school together. They studied the Book of Odes, the Book of Spring and Autumn, The Book of Filial Piety, The Book of Great Learning, Histories of The Three Ancient Celestials and The Five Dynasties, and, well [*gesticulating from the young woman to the young beggar*] the other classics that have made the young ones as they are. They rode on the same bamboo-twig horse, kicked the same shuttle-cock, looked at each other in the same boss mirror, played hide-and-seek until age separated them. [*Euphuistically.*] Then the girl hides herself in the red chamber, and the boy — seeks rice on the street. He has the natural capacity of eight piculs [1] and book learning of five wagon-loads. He can compose the Five Phœnix Verse while pacing only seven steps. — And they were so fond of each other. One day they said to me, "Liu Ma-Ma, we have played groom and bride; when we become man and woman, we will be husband and wife, and you will be the match-maker, won't you?" And I promised them even as they promised each other.

THE MAGISTRATE. When was that?

THE SECOND MATCH-MAKER. It must have been in the *last* cycle of sixty years. Let me see. The ox-year has oc-

[1] A picul is a weight in use in China and the East generally, equivalent to about 133⅓ pounds.

curred twice, so probably it was the year of rats. The common denominator is six times ten. Ten stars form the heavenly system, and twelve creatures rule the animal kingdom. It should be about thirteen years ago.

THE MAGISTRATE. *About* thirteen years ago, Liu Ma?

THE SECOND MATCH-MAKER. Yes, and we did have a plague in that year. It was three years before the year of The Great Earthquake when the King Dragon whirled his trunk, six years before the Emperor moved south and made the people sing the song of the Call of the Deer, and nine years before Master Tu was admitted to the Circle of Bamboo Shoot and bestowed the blue-and-purple gown after the Red-Robe-Fairy had nodded his head to the civil examiner.

THE MAGISTRATE. How came he to this?

THE SECOND MATCH-MAKER. Because the long travel to the capital wasted and spent him as the chase does the hound. He was reduced to selling even his library, as the elephant disposes of his ivory; but he has induced many a hero to come back and tell his luck and aspirations to me.

THE MOTHER. I never knew anybody aspired after me as a mother-in-law, behind my back.

THE MAGISTRATE. What evidence have you that they were willing to be husband and wife?

THE SECOND MATCH-MAKER. Here is a picture of the Great Monad which they painted on a triangular lantern during the Lantern Festival. [*She displays a picture of the Great Monad, a symbol of Chinese cosmogony representing the dualistic principle of man and woman, the male in the female and the female in the male, supposed to be the first Chinese philosophical document.*] The one said to the other, "That black is Yin; that's you: this white is Yang; it's I." And each of us has kept a copy as a testimony.

[*Tu Kuang-Yang takes out a similar copy from his book and Han Chu-Yin takes out her copy from her sash. All, including The Magistrate, are surprised.*]

THE MAGISTRATE [*to The Mother*]. Do you wish this man as a son-in-law?

THE MOTHER. My Lord, if my humble self be permitted to select a husband ——

THE MAGISTRATE. I grant you the right to choose one, for your daughter.

THE MOTHER. I will choose ——

THE OLD MAN. Remember the will of your departed husband.

TUAN CHAI. Remember all the gossip of the villagers and the six ceremonies.

CHUNG TING. My silvery horses, my scarlet jacket, and my skilled arrows.

LI CHE-FU. My golden ingots, my red mansion, and my prosperity!

TU KUANG-YANG [*speaking earnestly but reservedly for the first time*]. My affection for Chu-Yin.

THE MOTHER. I think I will not choose the beggar.

VOICES. No, not the beggar!

LI CHE-FU. Accept my riches!

CHUNG TING. My glory!

THE OLD MAN. My age!

TUAN CHAI. My humble wish!

THE SECOND MATCH-MAKER. My word!

THE MOTHER. I declare I never had so many suitors in my bygone days — not even a beggar.

THE MAGISTRATE [*to Han Chu-Yin*]. Well, your mother does not approve of the beggar; what is your wish?

[*Han Chu-Yin is silent and hides her face in her sash.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Tell me, what do you choose?

HAN CHU-YIN [*distressedly*]. I choose to die!

THE MAGISTRATE. In order to settle the case?

HAN CHU-YIN. Yes, and quickly!

THE MAGISTRATE. Good Maiden, Kao-Yao had no more sagacity in dissolving disputes, but I fear you have made up your mind to deny yourself wealth, happiness, and power, which you might find in any of these people.

HAN CHU-YIN. I am denied that which I value most. I wish to end it all.

THE MAGISTRATE. Is that final?

HAN CHU-YIN. Yes, to eternity!

THE MAGISTRATE. May your ancestor bless you! I accord you the potion that brings eternal tranquillity. [*To The Second Attendant.*] Bring forth the potion phial provided by the ancients to impart to the mortal the pleasant sleep.

[*The Second Attendant goes out; this time he makes us wait for some time. Slowly he brings the potion to Han Chu-Yin. She holds it in her trembling hand; life and death struggle within her. She sighs, lingers, and sighs yet again.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Be courageous, virtuous maiden. One dies only once; the rest is peace. If you cannot lift the phial, I shall have the attendant help you.

[*Han Chu-Yin lifts the phial to her quivering lips. The Mother and Tu Kuang-Yang advance toward the young woman, but are held back by the attendants. She swallows the contents at a gulp, and sinks to the floor.*]

HAN CHU-YIN. I depart. May peace be with all!

[*She lies down unconscious. Everybody is petrified. Solemn music. At length The Magistrate speaks.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Well, she died a virtuous death. Li Che-Fu, she was almost married to you. Will you bury her in your family graveyard?

LI CHE-FU. I wanted a live housekeeper, not a dead wife. Since she had an early betrothal, the body belongs to the first betrothed.

THE MAGISTRATE. Chung Ting, your stars crossed each other before either of you was born. Now you can accept the will of your parents and your parents' parents, you may have your claim.

CHUNG TING. We never saw each other and were not formally married. Let the legal husband or the true lover take the body.

THE MAGISTRATE. Tu Kuang-Yang, there is the spoils of your love. She was your promised wife. Will you take care of her?

TU KUANG-YANG. Yes, I loved her. A promise is a promise. I will take her, and will follow her soon.

THE MOTHER [*realizing what has happened, she breaks into an hysterical cry*]. You beggar! You kill-joy! You will soon pay for it!

SEVERAL VOICES. The beggar! The kill-joy! Hang him! Let him pay for it!

THE MOTHER [*turning to Li Che-Fu*]. You yellow dog! [*To Chung Ting.*] You spotted tiger! [*To The Old Man.*] You white-whiskered monkey! [*To Tuan Chai.*] You greedy rat! [*To The Second Match-maker.*] You lowly snake!

THE MAGISTRATE [*striking the mallet on the table*]. Order! Order!

[*The Attendants tap the table sides with their bamboo staves. The people rise to leave.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Wait a while! The case of the thrice promised bride is not yet finished. Among you three disputants only the beggar, Tu Kuang-Yang, is a true claimant; the other two are as false as shifting sand. I hereby confiscate, Li Che-Fu, your property; and deprive you, Chung Ting, of your degrees and privileges appertaining. On you, Tu Kuang-Yang, the true lover, I bestow the golden ingots of the merchant, the horses of the Knight, and the life service of Liu Ma, so that you can have feasts and rituals. And now I grant you the privilege of administering a potion to revive the unconscious but virtuous maiden from the effects of the sleeping potion I gave the maiden to be known hereafter as your legal wife.

[*The Second Attendant brings the potion to Tu Kuang-Yang who ceremoniously takes it to the heap of beautiful costumery, stoops over the beautiful face, and goes through the motion of administering the*

potion. Han Chu-Yin comes to consciousness, and is bewildered at seeing Tu Kuang-Yang bending over her.]

HAN CHU-YIN. Am I dreaming, or are we meeting in the Other World?

TU KUANG-YANG. No, my beloved, we are under the sky, on the earth, and in the Middle Kingdom.

THE MOTHER. And before all these people! [*Gesticulating.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Han Chu-Yin, I marry you to Tu Kuang-Yang and give you wealth, happiness, and love, in one.

[*Successively he applies black ink and red ink with the Chinese brushes and then imprints his official seal to the three copies of The Great Monad.*

The couple kow-tow to The Magistrate and then to The Mother. The Second Match-maker and The Mother help the couple to get up, holding the pictures of The Great Monad over their heads.]

THE BRIDEGROOM [*facing the audience*]. Long live my wife!

CURTAIN

THE COPPER POT[1]

A PLAY IN TWO SCENES

By FRANCES HEALEY

PERSONS

Two Travelers.
Amin, *the judge.*
Salameh, *the coffee-house keeper.*
Two Strangers.
Abdallah, *the generous.*
Fat'ma, *leader of the dancers.*
Hedba, *chief dancer.*
Rasid, *the avaricious.*
Habsah, Nur, Jamaleh } *village women.*
Villagers and Dancing-girls.

SCENE I

The scene represents a village street east of the Bahr Lut. At R. *a door opens into Abdallah's courtyard; adjoining it, and occupying most of the stage, is Salameh's coffee-house. The low stools are set in the street itself, and through the wide-open doors one sees the dark interior, with low, rug-covered benches at the sides, a large charcoal brazier, copper coffee-pots, etc. At the extreme* L. *is Rasid's doorway, which, if more desirable, need not be shown on the stage at all.*

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When the curtain rises, several men are discovered in the coffee-house smoking and drinking coffee. Salameh and Amin, the Judge, in front. Two travelers enter.

FIRST TRAVELER. This is the house. [*Knocks at Abdallah's.*]

SECOND TRAVELER. They say he makes all welcome.

[*The door opens.*]

FIRST TRAVELER. Abdallah?

ABDALLAH. Come in, come in! Nay, but ye are welcome!

[*He draws them in in friendly fashion, the gate closing behind them.*]

AMIN. So Abdallah has guests to-night!

SALAMEH. Wallachi! Always he has guests! One or two every night. All travelers know him for a generous man!

AMIN. He is generous. He has a good name in the city.

SALAMEH. In the city and in the desert. He is an honest man.

[*Two strangers come in and sit down. A servant goes to them and takes their orders.*]

AMIN. Yet he is not rich!

SALAMEH. He spends all on his guests.

AMIN. It is better to be hospitable than to be rich.

SALAMEH. It is better. Some do not think so. [*Abdallah's door opens. He steps into the street and comes to the coffee-house.*] Welcome!

ABDALLAH. Allah is good! Five guests have honored me to-night!

SALAMEH. Five!

ABDALLAH. Allah is great! Would that he might send me a larger pot in which to cook their dinner! Are not these strangers?

SALAMEH. They have just come in.

ABDALLAH [*goes to newcomers and salaams*]. Peace to ye!

STRANGERS. On thee be peace!

ABDALLAH. Ye are strangers here?

STRANGERS. We are strangers. We have come from Ma'an.

ABDALLAH. Nay, but ye are no longer strangers! Ye are my guests! [*They protest.*]

SALAMEH [*to Amin*]. If Abdallah's pot was too small for five, how shall it hold food for seven?

ABDALLAH [*to strangers*]. By the Prophet, ye shall come!

AMIN. Allah, who sends the guests, should also send the pot to cook their food.

ABDALLAH [*hurries to Salameh*]. Thy mercy is as the mercy of Allah! Canst thou not lend me a pot? Alas, mine is too small — it is but a little pot!

SALAMEH. My largest is as thine. I have a new one, but it is very small.

ABDALLAH. Woe is me! For unless I can borrow I am disgraced!

SALAMEH. Allah send thee comfort!

ABDALLAH. May Allah grant thee his peace!

[*Exit with two strangers into his house.*]

SALAMEH. There is but one man in the city with a pot larger than Abdallah's!

AMIN. Then is his honor saved! Who would not lend to save a friend's good name? [*Salameh shakes his head.*] A copper pot is but a copper pot! A man would lend more than a copper pot to his neighbor!

SALAMEH. Not Rasid!

AMIN. Rasid is not generous!

SALAMEH. Rasid is rich rather than generous. [*Sounds of flute and drum. Salameh turns to look.*] It is Fat'ma and her dancers. They'll have small gain from you or me!

[*Enter Fat'ma and the dancers.*]

FAT'MA. Shall we dance for you to-night, O Salameh?

SALAMEH. Who would pay ye? I am a poor man. [*They laugh.*] The Judge is old [*Amin bristles*], and, besides us, I expect only Rasid.

FAT'MA. Rasid! [*The dancers laugh.*]

HEDBA. Rasid is not poor, neither is he old, but Allah preserve me from dancing again for copper coins!

AMIN [*holding up a gold-piece*]. Wilt thou dance for gold, little one?

FAT'MA. For gold — and for Amin!

[*Music. Hedba dances. Amin gives her the money.*]

SALAMEH. Listen, Fat'ma! I am a poor man, but I will give you more than one piece of gold. Abdallah has many guests to-night. Go, dance for him!

AMIN. Since Abdallah has no pot for his dinner, it may be ye can make his guests forget their hunger and so save his honor!

FAT'MA. Allah reward thee!

[*The dancers cross to Abdallah's door and knock.*]

SALAMEH [*to Amin*]. Dancing is good after meat, but instead of food? La!

AMIN. Then must Rasid lend his pot to Abdallah!

SALAMEH. Rasid is shrewd. If he lent to his own father, he would drive a hard bargain! [*Abdallah's gate opens.*]

FAT'MA. Shall we dance for the guests to-night, O Abdallah?

ABDALLAH. Marloom! Come in, come in! [*To Salameh and Amin.*] Praise Allah! He has sent me guests, and now he has sent me dancers for entertainment.

SALAMEH. Aye, O Abdallah! But thy dinner?

ABDALLAH. True, I have no pot. But who knoweth the heart of Allah? It may be he will send me one. [*Exit.*]

AMIN. Allah gives wisdom to the good. Abdallah is not a fool!

[*Music, drums and the sound of singing from Abdallah's house; applause and laughter and the merry voices of the feasters.*]

SALAMEH. Allah's wisdom is not as man's wisdom and Rasid is very rich. Every night from this side come sounds of feasting and merriment; music, and the rich smell of semneh and the roasting lamb. Every morning

strangers leave the house and go forth into the desert, to other towns and into the low, black tents; and everywhere men speak well of our village because of Abdallah's hospitality. Here, Rasid lives. He is rich, but he makes no feasts. His flocks are like snow on the hillsides, the sound of their bleating at twilight is as the sound of a thousand silver bells. He sells wool and wheat. He trades in large cities. O Judge, what do men say of Rasid?

AMIN. Yes, Rasid's is the wisdom of men!

SALAMEH. Every evening he comes here. He picks up gossip, a word here, a word there. And he buys one cup of bitter coffee!

AMIN. Yet, he may lend his great copper pot to Abdallah!

[*Abdallah's gate opens and he hurries into the above.*]

ABDALLAH. Has not Rasid a huge copper pot?

SALAMEH. One large enough to cook a whole lamb. But he never lends!

ABDALLAH. He must lend to me. See, his gate is opening!

[*Rasid enters. He comes in slowly, searching the coffee-house with his eyes.*]

SALAMEH. Peace to thee, O Rasid!

RASID. And to ye, peace! [*To servant.*] Bitter coffee!

[*Rasid seats himself. Salameh claps his hands, and as the servant comes, cries:*]

SALAMEH. Bring fresh pipes!

ABDALLAH. Nay, I have guests!

[*Pipes and coffee are brought. Abdallah stands, but the others are seated.*]

RASID. Guests, and always guests, Abdallah! By the Prophet, it is well that thou art a rich man!

ABDALLAH. Would to Allah I were rich enough to buy a huge copper pot!

RASID [*scenting a bargain*]. A copper pot is not dear to one so rich as Abdallah!

ABDALLAH. A copper pot as large as I would buy is not cheap. Moreover it is late and the shops are closed.

RASID. Thou wouldst buy a copper pot to-night?

ABDALLAH. Alas, I am but a poor man. I need a copper pot, but where shall I find one to buy, and where should I find the gold to pay?

RASID [*slowly*]. There is a pot, a huge pot, in my house. It is very large — the Djinn might cook a man in such a pot ——

ABDALLAH. Now praised be Allah! It is better to have friends than to be rich! It is better to borrow a copper pot from a neighbor than to meet shame before one's guests!

RASID [*a little taken aback*]. I might sell ——

ABDALLAH. If thou wilt lend, why should I buy?

AMIN. True, it would be a neighborly act, O Rasid!

SALAMEH. Indeed, Rasid is a generous neighbor.

RASID [*rises to go, feeling himself baited*]. Will fair words bring a stone from the bottom of the Dead Sea? Then will they make me lend my great copper pot!

AMIN. To a neighbor — to a friend!

ABDALLAH. Thy mercy is as the mercy of Allah! Lend it to me to-night, and I swear I will bring it back to thee at dawn!

RASID. I never borrow, neither do I lend!

AMIN. It is evil indeed to deny a neighbor, and he that is far from evil can sing!

ABDALLAH. I swear I will bring it back at dawn! Nay, if I return it not, I swear to divorce all my wives!

RASID. By Allah, I will not lend my copper pot!

ABDALLAH. For the honor of thy father's beard!

RASID. I will not lend! [*Turns to go.*]

AMIN. O Rasid! Knowest thou not that he who lends to a neighbor in distress giveth alms to Allah? And shall Allah stand in a man's debt?

FAT'MA [*slips in and runs up to Rasid*]. Thou owest me two gold pieces for the dancing in Abara two months ago!

RASID. Gold? Gold for dancing? Ah!

FAT'MA. Shame! To break thine oath and to pay golden-footed Hedba with copper coins!

AMIN. In truth, Rasid, men of honor pay dancers in gold; also a man of wealth should lend to his neighbor!

ABDALLAH. Lend me thy copper pot!

RASID. It is huge — it is heavy — it is ——

ABDALLAH. It is such a pot as I desire!

AMIN. For a friend's good name, O Rasid!

FAT'MA. Pay me what thou owest!

RASID [*trying to ignore Fat'ma*]. Come, then, but thou hast sworn to return the pot at dawn. Ye are witnesses!

SALAMEH. }
AMIN. } We are witnesses! [*Exeunt Rasid and Abdallah.*]

FAT'MA. I also am a witness, O Rasid! [*Exit.*]

SALAMEH. I have heard of miracles. Praise Allah, I have now seen one!

AMIN. Aye, Rasid lent, it is true. Indeed, he could not do otherwise. There be greater miracles than these, O Salameh!

ABDALLAH [*off*]. Thy mercy is as Allah's mercy, and who can measure his by line or rule?

RASID [*off*]. At dawn!

ABDALLAH [*off*]. At dawn I swear to bring back thy copper pot! Farewell! [*Enters, carrying pot.*] It is a copper pot after my own heart! It is huge, a very mother of all pots!

[*Exit into own house. The stage darkens. Sounds of singing, drums and twanging strings from Abdallah's house. The other men in the coffee-house all go off one or two at a time.*]

SALAMEH. Abdallah has borrowed the pot — we be witnesses. Yea, and Rasid is cruel to his debtors. He would exact a huge payment if anything were lost or stolen. What thinkest thou, will Abdallah return the pot at dawn?

AMIN. Marloom, he will return it. Abdallah is an honest man!

SALAMEH. Aye, he is honest, but he is also very clever. I am a poor man. The friendship of my friends is as gold to me!

AMIN. Abdallah's friendship is better than gold. Rasid's is as clay. Have no fear, Salameh. Abdallah will keep his oath.

SALAMEH. I do not fear. Moreover, though I am a poor man and friendship is as gold to me, yet I myself would give a copper pot to see Abdallah outwit Rasid.

[*The sounds of revelry have died away.*]

AMIN. It is late, and shadows walk instead of men. Thou wilt stay?

SALAMEH. Yes, I often sleep here on a bench; and to-morrow I would be here at dawn.

AMIN. Farewell. [*Exit.*]

[*Salameh closes the shutters of his shop and goes in, closing the doors behind him. When all is quiet, Abdallah's gate opens and he peers out. Then he slips furtively up to Salameh's door and knocks, softly at first, then louder.*]

SALAMEH [*within*]. Who knocks?

ABDALLAH. It is I, thy neighbor! Open to me for the mercy of Allah! [*The door opens and Abdallah goes in. Candle-light flickers uncertainly through the chinks of the shutters. Abdallah, off; delightedly.*] It is of the very shape, and quite new!

SALAMEH [*off*]. I bought it of Abu Meen, the coppersmith, this morning. Take it, take it for nothing. What are forty piastres between thee and me?

ABDALLAH [*off*]. Nay, but I will pay! I desire it to be a secret purchase between thee and me; therefore, I will give thee what thou wilt.

SALAMEH [*off*]. Gold is the Sultan's mute. Thou shalt have it for the price I paid. Lo, it is thine!

[*Enter Abdallah with a small copper pot in his hand.*]

ABDALLAH [*turning back*]. May Allah reward thee! May he increase thy goods!

SALAMEH [*off*]. And thine! Farewell. [*Abdallah slips out, hiding the pot under his cloak, and goes into his own house. Both doors are shut. After a short pause the muezzin sounds in the distance and the sky glows with the dawn. The muezzin continues. Salameh opens his doors and shutters and goes in to his prayers. Abdallah's gate opens and he sets outside Rasid's pot. Then he comes out in the growing light, carrying rather tenderly the small new pot. With the two in his hands, he crosses the stage. As he passes Salameh's open door, Salameh rises.*] May thy day be happy!

ABDALLAH. May thine be blessed.

SALAMEH. Thou art an honest man, O Abdallah!

ABDALLAH. I keep my oath which thou hast witnessed. Lo, day breaks.

SALAMEH. But the little pot!

ABDALLAH. A miracle, O Salameh! A miracle! [*Rasid's gate opens and he peers out. Seeing Abdallah at Salameh's, he comes out and meets him there.*] May thy day be happy!

RASID. And blessed! It is already after daybreak!

ABDALLAH. True, O neighbor! I was delayed. Here is thy own, according to my oath. [*He sets the two pots on the ground at Rasid's feet.*] Salameh is witness, I have kept my word.

SALAMEH. Eiwa, but ——

RASID. The large and handsome one is mine. What is the small pot? I am an honest man and want but my own!

ABDALLAH. I, too, am an honest man, O Rasid. Last night a great wonder chanced. I cooked my dinner in thy pot, I washed it, and set it in the courtyard. When I went out this morning, lo, there lay the little pot beside it, this little pot which it had borne in the night!

SALAMEH. Which it had borne?

RASID. Ah, yes! Mine is indeed a marvelous pot!

ABDALLAH. And as the mother is thine, so is the child. Is it not a fair young pot?

[*Salameh examines pot, and light dawns upon him.*]

RASID. True, as the mother is mine, the child should be also. Yes, both pots are mine. Ye now understand why I was unwilling to lend. If I had said that it might bear a child, who would have believed me? But now Abdallah hath said it, and thou, Abdallah, art an honest man!

ABDALLAH. Thank God, I am honest! [*He turns to go.*]

RASID [*catching him*]. And, Abdallah — I will lend to thee whenever thou hast need. Another time, who but Allah knoweth? — it may bear another child!

ABDALLAH. In truth, who knoweth — but Allah? May he increase thy goods, farewell. [*Exit.*]

SALAMEH. This is indeed a wonder, O Rasid!

RASID. A miracle. And, thank God, I am clever!

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The scene is the same, three days later, about sunset. In the coffee-house Salameh is seated. Occasional sounds of wailing come from Abdallah's house.

Enter Fat'ma and her dancers, accompanied by three women, Habsah, Nur, and Jamaleh.

SALAMEH. Welcome, ye Fat'ma! Do ye dance to-night?

FAT'MA. Aye, Abdallah's guests were generous. We hear he has prepared another feast ——

[*She is interrupted by the wailing.*]

HEDBA. Listen! Is Abdallah dead?

FAT'MA. Nay, I know not!

HEDBA. Alas, I have danced for Abdallah ——

JAMALEH. Salameh, who is dead?

SALAMEH. A stranger died last night. Abdallah weeps as if for one of his own sons.

FAT'MA. Abdallah is a generous man. It would be friendly for us to mourn with him.

HEDBA. Come then —— [*She goes to Abdallah's door.*]

SALAMEH. It would be friendly! [*hastily*] and yet I think it would be more friendly to wait till sunset!

HEDBA. Then will his grief be less!

[*She enters, followed by Fat'ma and dancers.*]

SALAMEH. No less. And then will his vow of silence be accomplished and ye can comfort him!

HABSAH. Has he vowed silence?

SALAMEH. Till sunset. When I first heard the wailing I knocked. A slave told me. [*Looking off.*] Lo! Rasid returns from his three days' journey!

NUR. Much may happen in three days!

SALAMEH. Much has happened. Last night Abdallah borrowed the great copper pot again! He has not yet returned it!

JAMALEH. Think you that Rasid will wait till sunset?

HABSAH. He will come now — to mourn with Abdallah!

RASID [*off*]. My copper pot? Again? And he has not brought it back?

[*A slave cries out for mercy. Rasid enters, very angry. He hears the wailing at Abdallah's house and pauses irresolutely near the coffee-house.*]

SALAMEH. Welcome, O Rasid!

RASID. Peace to ye. Abdallah is dead?

SALAMEH. Nay, a guest who came to him last night has died.

RASID. He has taken my huge copper pot! I will get it myself!

SALAMEH. Wait till sunset!

RASID. I will not wait!

HABSAH. Abdallah will see no one till sunset. He has a vow!

SALAMEH. See, the sun is low over the desert!

NUR. How soft the light is at sunset! Who would think he could be so fierce at midday? Lo, how he touches with tender fingers the ripening dates! They hang against the tall, straight trunks like golden fruit of Paradise, half-hidden in the leaves! And the cool wind that Allah sends with the sunset whispers, "Hush, hush!" in the dry fronds, and blows the smoke of the evening fires across the town like a thin blue veil across the face of a beautiful woman!

RASID. The sun is set! [*The muezzin rings out, and Salameh immediately begins his devotions. Nur, Jamaleh, and Habsah retiring up stage. Rasid hesitates; then he too turns towards Mecca and hurries through his prayers. Last to begin, he is first to end, and hurries to Abdallah's door. He knocks. As the others rise, they stand watching him. At first, there is no answer, and the wailing breaks out anew. He knocks again, pounding furiously on the door. The door swings in, and Abdallah is seen standing in the arch, his clothes rent and awry, his beard and hair disheveled in mourning. Behind him the figures of Fat'ma and her dancers, disheveled in mourning, are dimly seen, sitting on the ground and rocking back and forth as they wail and "mourn." As Abdallah recognizes Rasid, who is in a towering rage, he groans and utters a despairing cry, his eyes raised to heaven.*] Where is my copper pot?

ABDALLAH. Alas!

RASID. It has borne another little one perhaps, or two, or might it be by chance — three?

ABDALLAH [*shaking his head*]. Alas, alas!

RASID. Where is my beautiful, my marvelous pot? [*Abdallah groans.*] Give me my copper pot!

ABDALLAH. Alas, alas! Woe is me!

RASID. Give me my pot!

ABDALLAH. Woe is me! I am ashamed to look in thy face! Woe is me, woe is me!

RASID. Now, by Allah! [*He starts to enter; glances back at the watching men and steps back, getting control of himself. The watchers draw nearer.*] Give me my pot!

ABDALLAH. Alas, I cannot!

RASID. Thou hast sold it!

ABDALLAH. Will ye insult me in my grief?

[*He makes as if to close the gate, but Rasid furiously throws it open.*]

RASID. I do not insult thee! We — we mourn with thee! Give me back my copper pot!

ABDALLAH. Alas, it is dead!

ALL. Dead!

RASID. That is a child's tale. A copper pot cannot die!

ABDALLAH [*broken-hearted*]. Nevertheless, it is dead.

RASID. Thou hast stolen it! A copper pot has never died!

ABDALLAH. It is dead.

RASID [*turns furiously*]. Let the Judge decide!

HABSAH. Lo! he comes!

SALAMEH. Amin comes!

[*Enter Amin.*]

AMIN. May Allah grant ye His peace! I come to mourn with the afflicted!

RASID. Justice, O Judge! Justice!

AMIN. Allah alone is just!

ABDALLAH. Give righteous judgment, O Judge!

AMIN. Allah alone is righteous.

RASID. Wilt thou judge my cause?

AMIN. Is it seemly to quarrel with a man in his grief? Doest thou well to strive with Abdallah in his affliction?

RASID. I do well!

[*Amin gravely seats himself in the center, Abdallah and Rasid standing a little before him at his right and left. The others a little back.*]

AMIN. For my fee I demand two lambs, sound and without blemish, and a copper pot of such a size.

RASID.
ABDALLAH. } It is a just demand.

AMIN [*to Rasid*]. Thy charge?

RASID. By Allah, O Judge! This man has stolen from me my great copper pot! Hear me and mark the truth! Salameh is my witness, that four nights ago, Abdallah came to me here in this coffee-house and begged to borrow my huge copper pot! O Judge, never has there been such a pot as mine! So heavy — so smooth — so red and shining — nay, it was more like a gold pot than like one of copper.

ABDALLAH. It was indeed a fair pot.

RASID [*a little taken aback*]. Ye hear — ye all are witnesses! I am an honest man, I never borrow, neither do I lend, yet this once, to save my neighbor's honor, against my will, against my wisdom and my custom, O Amin, I lent my pot to Abdallah!

ABDALLAH. Thou hast been a kind neighbor, O Rasid!

RASID [*still more taken aback*]. Yes, praise Allah, I am a kind neighbor — I am a kindly man!

ABDALLAH. Did I not return thy fair copper pot?

RASID. Aye, Abdallah returned the pot. It had a scratch on the bottom, but I am a generous man and take no account of trifles. Then, three days ago I went on a journey.

ABDALLAH. But the child ——

SALAMEH. There was something besides a scratch!

AMIN. Peace! We listen, O Rasid!

RASID. Three days have I traveled. Now as I rode up to my own house, weary and thirsty, the dust of the desert still clinging to my beard, my slave met me at the door. Trembling he confessed that Abdallah had borrowed my pot in my absence and that he had not yet returned it. Faint from my journey, I went to Abdallah's house, demanding my own. Abdallah refuses to give it to me, saying that my pot is dead!

ALL. Dead! A copper pot die! Nay, this is a wonder!

AMIN. Peace! Can copper die?

RASID. Allah knows, O Judge! Who ever heard of a copper pot that died? Bid Abdallah give me back my copper pot!

AMIN. Thou hast heard, O Abdallah?

ABDALLAH. I have heard!

AMIN. What hast thou to say?

ABDALLAH. Nothing. Rasid has spoken truth!

RASID. Ah-h! Give me back my pot!

ABDALLAH. Have I not said that it is dead? O Judge, this was no common pot. It was indeed more like a pot of gold than like one of copper. Rasid has spoken truth, but he has not told all. Four days ago I borrowed his great pot for the first time. I used it, washed it, and not knowing how wonderful a thing it was, I lay down to sleep. At dawn, when I went to take it home, there beside it lay a little new pot which it had borne in the night.

HABSAH. By Allah! A miracle!

JAMALEH. This was indeed a marvelous pot!

ABDALLAH. And as the mother belonged to Rasid, without doubt the child did also. I returned them to him according to my oath. Is it not true, O Rasid?

SALAMEH. I am witness! It is the truth!

AMIN. Rasid?

RASID. It is true.

HABSAH. Abdallah is indeed an honest man.

ABDALLAH. Last night I borrowed the pot again. I treated it kindly as before. Alas, this morning when I should have returned it to Rasid, I found — O, woe is me! — it had died in the night!

RASID. But a copper pot cannot die! Justice, O Judge!

AMIN. This is a strange tale. It is plain thine was no common pot. Hast thou the child?

RASID. It is in my house.

AMIN. Let it be brought!

RASID. I will go fetch it!

AMIN. Has Rasid none to do his errands?

RASID [*claps his hands*]. Ya abed! Slave! [*As the gate opens.*] Bring the small copper pot!

NUR. Great are the wonders of Allah! Now who would dream that copper should be born of copper?

JAMALEH. Yet is it more strange than that an egg should be born of a bird? Indeed, it is not unreasonable! Now if the copper pot had borne a child of gold — why, that would be indeed a miracle!

[*Enter slave with the small pot.*]

AMIN [*taking it*]. Is this indeed the child?

ABDALLAH. By Allah, it is!

AMIN [*to Rasid*]. Thou dost claim this because it is the child of thine that is lost?

RASID. The owner of the mare is owner also of the foal!

AMIN. True. Therefore this is, without doubt, thine. Still, Abdallah spoke truth when he told thee of this first wonder. Why dost thou now doubt his word?

RASID. It is impossible that copper should die!

AMIN. This is a hard question. A copper pot has borne a child. Abdallah claims, Rasid denies, that the pot has since died. Wilt thou, O Rasid, limit the power of Allah to one miracle? Behold, I give judgment, and my judgment is true. Ye all are witnesses. This is my word. A copper pot that can bear a child is mortal. It can also die.

ALL. Alhamdulillah! Great is Amin's wisdom! The wisdom of God is better than the wisdom of men! Whose mercy is as Allah's mercy?

RASID. Give me my little pot!

AMIN. Nay, O Rasid! This is my fee, this, and two of thy fairest, finest lambs! Curse not the judgment Allah gives through the lips of the Judge. [*Exit Rasid.*]

ABDALLAH. Now praised be Allah, who hath honored his servant and hath vindicated his name before all people!

To-night ye shall all be my guests, yea, every one! Now, by Allah, ye shall all come! For lo, Allah himself hath sent me a huge copper pot — a fair pot. — Allah, who sends me many guests, has now sent me a pot in which to cook their dinner.

CURTAIN

SWEETHEARTS [1]

AN ORIGINAL DRAMATIC CONTRAST IN TWO ACTS

By WILLIAM SCHWENK GILBERT

CHARACTERS

Mr. Harry Spreadbrow
Wilcox, *a Gardener*
Miss Jenny Northcott
Ruth, *her Maid Servant*

ACT I

Time: *Spring*, 1844

Scene: *The Garden of a pretty Country Villa. The house is new, and the garden shows signs of having been recently laid out; the shrubs are small, and the few trees about are moderate in size; small creepers are trained against the house; an open country in the distance; a little bridge, over a stream, forms the entrance to the garden.*

Wilcox is discovered seated on edge of garden wheelbarrow up stage, L., *preparing his "bass" for tying up plants; he rises and comes down with sycamore sapling in his hand; it is carefully done up in matting, and has a direction label attached to it.*

WILCOX [*reading the label*]. "For Miss Northcott, with Mr. Spreadbrow's kindest regards." "*Acer Pseudo Plantanus.*"

[1] This play is reprinted from the original English edition published in London by Chatto and Windus a few years after the first production of the play in 1874. American editions have been issued by Samuel French, 25 West 45th Street, New York City, by The Penn Publishing Company, 925 Filbert Street, Philadelphia, and by the Walter H. Baker Company, 41 Winter Street, Boston.

Aye, aye! sycamore, I suppose, though it ain't genteel to say so. Humph! sycamores are common enough in these parts; there ain't no call, as I can see, to send a hundred and twenty mile for one. Ah, Mr. Spreadbrow, no go — no go; it ain't to be done with "*Acer Pseudo Plantanuses.*" Miss Jenny's sent better men nor you about their business afore this, and as you're agoin' about your'n of your own free will to-night, and a good long way too, why I says, no go, no go! If I know Miss Jenny, she's a good long job, and you've set down looking at your work too long, and now that it's come to going, you'll need to hurry it, and Miss Jenny ain't a job to be hurried over, bless her. Take another three months, and I don't say there mightn't be a chance for you; but it'll take all that — ah, thank goodness, it'll take all that!

[*Enter Jenny from behind the house, prepared for gardening.*]

JENNY. Well, Wilcox, what have you got there? [*He touches his forehead and gives her the sycamore.*] Not my sycamore?

WILCOX. Yes, miss; Mr. Spreadbrow left it last night as the mail passed.

JENNY. Then he's returned already? Why, he was not expected for a week, at least.

WILCOX. He returned quite sudden last night, and left this here plant with a message that he would call at twelve o'clock to-day, miss.

JENNY. I shall be very glad to see him. So this is really a shoot of the dear old tree!

WILCOX. Come all the way from Lunnon, too. There's lots of 'em hereabouts, miss; I could ha' got you a armful for the asking.

JENNY. Yes, I dare say; but this comes from the dear old house at Hampstead.

WILCOX. Do it, now?

JENNY. You remember the old sycamore on the lawn where Mr. Spreadbrow and I used to sit and learn our lessons years ago? — well, this is a piece of it. And as Mr. Spreadbrow was going to London, I asked him to be so kind as to call, and tell the new people, with his compliments, that he wanted to cut a shoot from it for a young lady who had a very pleasant recollection of many very happy hours spent under it. It was an awkward thing for a nervous young gentleman to do, and it's very kind of him to have done it. [*Gives back the plant, which he places against upper porch of house.*] So he's coming this morning?

WILCOX. Yes, miss, to say good-bye.

JENNY [*crosses to* L. *and busies herself at stand of flowers*]. Good-bye? "How d'ye do," you mean.

WILCOX. No, miss, good-bye. I hear Mr. Spreadbrow's off to Ingy.

JENNY. Yes; I believe he is going soon.

WILCOX. Soon? Ah, soon enough! He joins his ship at Southampton to-night — so he left word yesterday.

JENNY. To-night? No; not for some weeks yet.

[*Alarmed.*]

WILCOX. To-night, miss. I had it from his own lips, and he's coming to-day to say good-bye.

JENNY [*aside*]. To-night!

WILCOX. And a good job too, say I, though he's a nice young gentleman, too.

JENNY. I don't see that it's a good job.

WILCOX. I don't want no young gentlemen hanging about here, miss. I know what they comes arter; — they comes arter the flowers.

JENNY. The flowers? What nonsense!

WILCOX. No, it ain't nonsense. The world's a haphazard garden where common vegetables like me, and hardy annuals like my boys, and sour crabs like my old 'ooman, and pretty delicate flowers like you and your sisters grow side by side. It's the flowers they come arter.

JENNY. Really, Wilcox, if papa don't object, I don't see what you have to do with it.

WILCOX. No, your pa' don't object; but I can't make your pa' out, miss. Walk off with one of his tuppenny toolips, and he's your enemy for life. Walk off with one of his darters, and he settles three hundred a year on you. Tell'ee what, miss: if I'd a family of grown gals like you, I'd stick a conservatory label on each of them — "Please not to touch the specimens!" — and I'd take jolly good care they didn't.

JENNY. At all events, if Mr. Spreadbrow is going away to-night, you need not be alarmed on my account. I am a flower that is not picked in a minute.

WILCOX. Well said, miss! And as he *is* going, and as you won't see him no more, I don't mind saying that a better-spoken young gentleman I don't know. [*Approaching Jenny who is now seated in chair* L. *of table.*] A good honest straight-for'ard young chap he is — looks you full in the face with eyes that seem to say, "I'm a open book — turn me over — look me through and through — read every page of me, and if you find a line to be ashamed on, tell me of it, and I'll score it through."

JENNY [*demurely*]. I daresay Mr. Spreadbrow is much as other young men are.

WILCOX. As other young men? No, no — Lord forbid, miss! Come — say a good word for him, miss, poor young gentleman. He's said many a good word of you, I'll go bail.

JENNY. Of me?

WILCOX [*takes ladder, which is leaning against the house, and places it against upper porch of house; going a little way up it, he speaks this speech from it; Jenny remains seated* L. *of table; taking off her garden gloves and looking annoyed, she takes off her hat and places it on back of* R. *chair by table*]. Aye. Why only Toosday, when I was at work again the high road, he rides up on his little bay 'oss, and he stands

talking to me over the hedge and straining his neck to catch a sight of you at a window — that was Toosday. "Well, Wilcox," says he, "it's a fine day!" — it rained hard Toosday, but it's always a fine day with him. "How's Miss Northcott?" says he. "Pretty well, sir," says I. "Pretty she always is; and well she ought to be if the best of hearts and the sweetest of natures will do it!" Well, I knew *that*, so off I goes to another subject, and tries to interest him in drainage and subsoils and junction pipes; but no, nothin' would do for him but he must bring the talk back to *you*. So at last I gets sick of it, and I up and says: "Look ye here, Mr. Spreadbrow," says I, "I'm only the gardener. This is Toosday and Miss Northcott's pa's in the study, and I dessay *he'll* be happy to hear what you've got to say about *her*." Lord it'd ha' done your heart good to see how he flushed up as he stuck his spurs into the bay, and rode off fifteen miles to the hour! [*Laughing*.] That was Toosday.

JENNY [*very angrily*]. He had no right to talk about me to a servant.

WILCOX [*coming down from ladder*]. But, bless you, don't be hard on him, he couldn't help it, miss. But don't you be alarmed, he's going away to-night, for many and many a long year, and you won't never be troubled with *him* again. He's going with a heavy heart, take my word for it, and I see his eyes all wet, when he spoke about sayin' good-bye to you; he'd the sorrow in his throat, but he's a brave lad, and he gulped it down, though it was as big as an apple. [*Ring*.] There he is. [*Going*.] Soothe him kindly, miss — don't you be afraid, you're safe enough now — he's a good lad, and he can't do no harm now.

[*Exit Wilcox, over bridge*.]

JENNY. What does he want to go to-day for? he wasn't going for three months. He could remain if he liked; India has gone on very well without him for five thousand years; it could have waited three months longer; but men

are always in such a hurry. He might have told me before — he *would* have done so, if he really, really liked me! I wouldn't have left *him* — yes I would — but then that's different. Well, if some people can go, some people can remain behind, and some other people will be only too glad to find *some people* out of their way!

[*Enter Spreadbrow, followed by Wilcox.*]

JENNY [*suddenly changes her manner, rises and crosses to* R.]. Oh, Mr. Spreadbrow, how-d'ye-do? Quite well? I'm so glad! Sisters quite well? That's right — how kind of you to think of my tree! So you are really and truly going to India to-night? That *is* sudden!

SPREADBROW. Yes, very sudden — terribly sudden. I only heard of my appointment two days ago, in London, and I'm to join my ship to-night. It's very sudden indeed — and — and I've come to say good-bye.

JENNY. Good-bye. [*Offering her hand.*]

SPREADBROW. Oh, but not like that, Jenny! Are you in a hurry?

JENNY. Oh dear no, I thought you were; won't you sit down? [*They sit — Jenny,* R., *Spreadbrow,* L., *of table.*] And so your sisters are quite well?

SPREADBROW. Not very; they are rather depressed at my going so soon. It may seem strange to you, but they will miss me.

JENNY. I'm sure they will. I should be terribly distressed at your going — if I were your sister. And you're going for so long!

SPREADBROW. I'm not likely to return for a great many years.

JENNY [*with a little suppressed emotion*]. I'm so sorry we shall not see you again. Papa will be very sorry.

SPREADBROW. More sorry than you will be?

JENNY. Well, no, I shall be very sorry, too — very, *very* sorry — there!

SPREADBROW. How very kind of you to say so.

JENNY. We have known each other so long — so many years, and we've always been good friends, and it's always sad to say good-bye for the last time [*He is delighted.*] to anybody! [*He relapses.*] It's so very sad when one knows for certain that it *must* be the last time.

SPREADBROW. I can't tell you how happy I am to hear you say it's so sad. But [*Hopefully.*] my prospects are not altogether hopeless, there's one chance for me yet. I'm happy to say I'm extremely delicate, and there's no knowing, the climate may not agree with me, and I may be invalided home. [*Very cheerfully.*]

JENNY. Oh! but that would be very dreadful.

SPREADBROW. Oh, yes, of course it would be dreadful, in one sense; but it — it would have its advantages. [*Looking uneasily at Wilcox, who is hard at work.*] Wilcox is hard at work, I see.

JENNY. Oh, yes, Wilcox is hard at work. He is very industrious.

SPREADBROW. Confoundedly industrious! He is working in the sun without his hat. [*Significantly.*]

JENNY. Poor fellow.

SPREADBROW. Isn't it injudicious, at his age?

JENNY. Oh, I don't think it will hurt him.

SPREADBROW. I really think it will.

[*He motions to her to send him away.*]

JENNY. Do you? Wilcox, Mr. Spreadbrow is terribly distressed because you are working in the sun.

WILCOX. That's mortal good of him. [*Aside, winking.*] They want me to go. All right; he can't do much harm now. [*Aloud.*] Well, sir, the sun is hot, and I'll go and look after the cucumbers away yonder, right at the other end of the garden. [*Wilcox going; Spreadbrow is delighted.*]

JENNY. No, no, no! — don't go away! Stop here; only put on your hat. That's what Mr. Spreadbrow meant. [*Wilcox puts on his hat.*] There, *now* are you happy?

[*To Spreadbrow, who looks miserable.*]

SPREADBROW. I suppose it will soon be his dinner time?

JENNY. Oh, he *has* dined. You *have* dined, haven't you, Wilcox?

WILCOX. Oh, yes, miss, *I've* dined, thank'ye kindly.

JENNY. Yes; he *has* dined! Oh! I quite forgot!

SPREADBROW. What?

JENNY. I must interrupt you for a moment, Wilcox; I quite forgot that I promised to send some flowers to Captain Dampier this afternoon. Will you cut them for me?

WILCOX. Yes, miss. [*Knowingly.*] Out of the conservatory, I suppose, miss?

[*Wilcox going; Spreadbrow again delighted.*]

JENNY. No, these will do. [*Pointing to open-air flower beds; Spreadbrow again disappointed.*] Stop, on second thoughts perhaps you *had* better take them out of the conservatory, and cut them carefully — there's no hurry.

WILCOX [*aside*]. *I* understand! Well, poor young chap, let him be, let him be; he's going to be turned off to-night, and his last meal may as well be a hearty one. [*Exit.*]

SPREADBROW [*rises in great delight*]. How good of you — how very kind of you!

JENNY. To send Captain Dampier some flowers?

SPREADBROW [*much disappointed*]. Do you really want to send that fellow some flowers?

JENNY. To be sure I do. [*Crosses*, L.] Why should I have asked Wilcox to cut them?

SPREADBROW. I thought — I was a great fool to think so — but I thought it might have been because we could talk more pleasantly alone.

JENNY. I really wanted some flowers; but as you say, we certainly can talk more pleasantly alone.

[*Crossing*, R., *she busies herself with preparing the sycamore.*]

SPREADBROW. I've often thought that nothing is such a check on — pleasant conversation — as the presence of — of — a gardener — who is not interested in the subject of conversation.

JENNY [*gets the tree and cuts off the matting with which it is bound, with garden scissors which she has brought with her from the table*]. Oh, but Wilcox is very interested in everything that concerns you. Do let me call him back.

[*About to do so.*]

SPREADBROW. No, no; not on my account!

JENNY. He and I were having quite a discussion about you when you arrived. [*Digging a hole for tree.*]

SPREADBROW. About me?

JENNY. Yes; indeed we almost quarreled about you.

SPREADBROW. What, was he abusing me then?

JENNY. Oh, no; he was speaking of you in the highest terms.

SPREADBROW [*much taken aback*]. Then — *you* were abusing me!

JENNY. N—no, not exactly *that;* I — I didn't agree with all he said — [*He is much depressed; she notices this.*] at least, not openly.

SPREADBROW [*hopefully*]. Then you did secretly?

JENNY. I shan't tell you.

SPREADBROW. Why?

JENNY. Because it will make you dreadfully vain. There!

SPREADBROW [*delighted*]. Very — very dreadfully vain?

[*He takes her hand.*]

JENNY. Very dreadfully vain indeed. Don't!

[*Withdraws her hand. During this she is digging the hole kneeling on the edge of the flower bed; he advances to her and kneels on edge of bed near her.*]

SPREADBROW. Do you know it's most delightful to hear you say that? It's without exception the most astonishingly pleasant thing I've ever heard in the whole course of my life! [*Sees the sycamore.*] Is that the tree I brought you? [*Rises from his knees.*]

JENNY. Yes. I'm going to plant it just in front of the drawing-room window, so that I can see it whenever I look out. Will you help me? [*He prepares to do so; she*

puts it into the hole.] Is that quite straight? Hold it up, please, while I fill in the earth. [*He holds it while she fills in the earth; gradually his hand slips down till it touches hers.*] It's no use, Mr. Spreadbrow, our both holding it in the same place! [*He runs his hand up the stem quickly.*]

SPREADBROW. I beg your pardon — very foolish of me.

JENNY. Very.

SPREADBROW. I'm very glad there will be something here to make you think of me when I'm many many thousand miles away, Jenny. For I shall be always thinking of *you.*

JENNY. Really, now that's very nice! It will be so delightful, and so odd to know that there's somebody thinking about me right on the other side of the world!

SPREADBROW [*sighing*]. Yes. It *will* be on the other side of the world!

JENNY. But that's the delightful part of it — right on the other side of the world! It will be such fun!

SPREADBROW. Fun!

JENNY. Of course, the farther you are away, the funnier it will seem. [*He is approaching her again.*] Now keep on the other side of the world. It's just the distance that gives the point to it. There are dozens and dozens of people thinking of me close at hand. [*She rises.*]

SPREADBROW [*taking her hand*]. But not as I think of you, Jenny — dear, dear Jenny, not as I've thought of you for years and years, though I never dared tell you so till now. I can't bear to think that anybody else is thinking of you kindly, earnestly, seriously, as I think of you.

JENNY [*earnestly*]. You may be quite sure, Harry, quite, quite sure that you will be the only one who is thinking of me kindly, seriously, and earnestly [*He is delighted.*] in India. [*He relapses; she withdraws her hand.*]

SPREADBROW. And when this tree, that we have planted together, is a big tree, you must promise me that you will sit under it every day, and give a thought now and then to the old playfellow who gave it to you.

JENNY. A big tree! Oh, but this little plant will never live to be a big tree, surely?

SPREADBROW. Yes, if you leave it alone, it grows very rapidly.

JENNY. Oh, but I'm not going to have a big tree right in front of the drawing-room window! It will spoil the view; it will be an eyesore. We had better plant it somewhere else.

SPREADBROW [*bitterly*]. No, let it be — you can cut it down when it becomes an eyesore. It grows very rapidly, but it will, no doubt, have lost all interest in your eyes long before it becomes an eyesore.

JENNY. But Captain Dampier says that a big tree in front of a window checks the current of fresh air.

SPREADBROW. Oh, if Captain Dampier says so, remove it.

JENNY. Now don't be ridiculous about Captain Dampier; I've a very great respect for his opinion on such matters.

SPREADBROW. I'm sure you have. You see a great deal of Captain Dampier, don't you?

JENNY. Yes, and we shall see a great deal more of him; he's going to take the Grange next door.

SPREADBROW [*bitterly*]. That will be very convenient.

JENNY [*demurely*]. Very.

SPREADBROW [*jealously*]. You seem to admire Captain Dampier very much.

JENNY. I think he is very good-looking. Don't you?

SPREADBROW. He's well enough — for a small man.

JENNY. Perhaps he'll grow.

SPREADBROW. Is Captain Dampier going to live here always?

JENNY. Yes, until he marries.

SPREADBROW [*eagerly*]. Is — is he likely to marry?

JENNY. I don't know. [*Demurely.*] Perhaps he may.

SPREADBROW. But whom — whom?

JENNY [*bashfully*]. Haven't you heard? I thought you knew!

SPREADBROW [*excitedly*]. No, no, I don't know; I've heard

nothing. Jenny — dear Jenny — tell me the truth; don't keep anything from me. Don't leave me to find it out; it will be terrible to hear of it out there; and, if you have ever liked me, and I'm sure you have, tell me the whole truth at once!

JENNY [*bashfully*]. Perhaps, as an old friend, I ought to have told you before; but indeed, indeed I thought you knew. Captain Dampier is engaged to be married to — to — my cousin Emmie.

SPREADBROW [*intensely relieved*]. To your cousin Emmie. Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you! Oh, my dear, dear Jenny, do — do let me take your hand.

[*Takes her hand and shakes it enthusiastically.*]

JENNY. Are you going?

SPREADBROW. No. [*Releasing it, much cast down.*] I was going to ask you to do me a great favor, and I thought I could ask it better if I had hold of your hand. I was going to ask you if you would give me a flower — any flower, I don't care what it is.

JENNY [*affecting surprise*]. A flower? Why, of course I will. But why?

SPREADBROW [*earnestly*]. That I may take a token of you and of our parting wherever I go; that I may possess an emblem of you that I shall never — never part with, that I can carry about with me night and day wherever I go, throughout my whole life.

JENNY [*apparently much affected, crosses slowly to* R., *stoops and takes up large geranium in pot*]. Will this be too big?

SPREADBROW [*disconcerted*]. But I mean a flower — only a flower.

JENNY. Oh, but do have a bunch! Wilcox shall pick you a beauty.

SPREADBROW. No, no; I want you to pick it for me. I don't care what it is — a daisy will do — if *you* pick it for me!

JENNY. What an odd notion! [*Crossing to flower stand,* L., *and picking a piece of mignonette; he puts down flower pot by*

bed, R.] There! [*Picking a flower and giving it to him.*] Will that do?

SPREADBROW. I can't tell you how inestimably I shall prize this flower. I will keep it while I live, and whatever good fortune may be in store for me, nothing can ever be so precious in my eyes.

JENNY. I had no idea you were so fond of flowers. Oh, do have some more!

SPREADBROW. No, no — but — you must let me give you this in return; I brought it for you, Jenny dear — dear Jenny! Will you take it from me?

[*Takes a rose from his button hole, and offers it.*]

JENNY [*amused and surprised*]. Oh, yes!

[*Takes it and puts it down on the table carelessly; he notices this with much emotion.*]

SPREADBROW. Well, I've got to say good-bye; there's no reason why it shouldn't be said at once. [*Holding out his hand.*] Good-bye, Jenny!

JENNY [*cheerfully*]. Good-bye!

[*He stands for a moment with her hand in his; she crosses to porch*, R.]

SPREADBROW. Haven't — haven't you anything to say to me?

JENNY [*after thinking it over*]. No, I don't think there's anything else. No — nothing.

[*She leans against the porch; he stands over her.*]

SPREADBROW. Jenny, I'm going away to-day, for years and years, or I wouldn't say what I'm going to say — at least not yet. I'm little more than a boy, Jenny; but if I were eighty, I couldn't be more in earnest — indeed I couldn't! Parting for so many years is like death to me; and if I don't say what I'm going to say before I go, I shall never have the pluck to say it after. We were boy and girl together, and — and I loved you then — and every year I've loved you more and more; and now that I'm a man, and you are nearly a woman, I — I, Jenny dear — I've nothing more to say!

JENNY. How you astonish me!

SPREADBROW. Astonish you? Why, you know that I loved you.

JENNY. Yes, yes; as a boy loves a girl — but now that I am a woman, it's impossible that you can care for me.

SPREADBROW. Impossible — because you are a woman!

JENNY. You see it's so unexpected.

SPREADBROW. Unexpected?

JENNY. Yes. As children it didn't matter, but it seems so shocking for grown people to talk about such things. And then, not gradually, but all at once — in a few minutes. It's awful!

SPREADBROW. Oh, Jenny, think. I've no time to delay — my having to go has made me desperate. One kind word from you will make me go away happy: without that word, I shall go in unspeakable sorrow. Jenny, Jenny, say one kind word!

JENNY [*earnestly*]. Tell me what to say.

SPREADBROW. It must come from you, my darling; say whatever is on your lips — whether for good or ill — I can bear it now.

JENNY. Well, then: I wish you a very very pleasant voyage — and I hope you will be happy and prosperous — and you must take great care of yourself — and you can't think how glad I shall be to know that you think of me, now and then, in India. There!

SPREADBROW. Is that all?

JENNY. Yes, I think that's all. [*Reflectively.*] Yes — that's all.

SPREADBROW. Then — [*With great emotion which he struggles to suppress.*] there's nothing left but to say good-bye — [*Music in orchestra till end of Act, "Good-bye, Sweetheart."*] and I hope you will always be happy, and that, when you marry, you will marry a good fellow who will — who will — who will — good-bye! [*Exit, rapidly.*]

[*Jenny watches him out — sits down, leaving the gate*

open — hums an air gaily — looks round to see if he is coming back — goes on humming — takes up the flower he has given her — plays with it — gradually falters, and at last bursts into tears, laying her head on the table over the flower he has given her, and sobbing violently as the Curtain falls.]

CURTAIN

ACT II

Time: Autumn, 1874

SCENE: *The Same as in Act I, with such additions and changes as may be supposed to have taken place in thirty years. The house, which was bare in Act I, is now entirely covered with Virginia and other creepers; the garden is much more fully planted than in Act I, and trees that were small in Act I are tall and bushy now; the general arrangement of the garden is the same, except that the sycamore planted in Act I has developed into a large tree, the boughs of which roof in the stage; the landscape has also undergone a metamorphosis, inasmuch as that which was open country in Act I is now covered with picturesque semi-detached villas, and there are indications of a large town in the distance. The month is September, and the leaves of the Virginia creepers wear their Autumn tint.*

Jenny discovered seated on a bench at the foot of the tree, and Ruth is standing by her side, holding a skein of cotton, which Jenny is winding. Jenny is now a pleasant-looking middle-aged lady.

JENNY. Have you any fault to find with poor Tom?

RUTH. No, miss, I've no fault to find with Tom. But a girl

can't marry every young man she don't find fault with, can she now, miss?

JENNY. Certainly not, Ruth. But Tom seems to think you have given him some cause to believe that you are fond of him.

RUTH [*bridling up*]. It's like his impudence, miss, to say so! Fond of *him* indeed!

JENNY. He hasn't said so, Ruth, but I'm quite sure he thinks so. I have noticed of late that you have taken a foolish pleasure in playing fast and loose with poor Tom, and this has made him very unhappy, — very unhappy indeed; so much so that I think it is very likely that he will make up his mind to leave my service altogether.

RUTH [*piqued*]. Oh, miss, if Tom can make up his mind to go, I'm sure *I* wouldn't stand in his way for worlds.

JENNY. But I think you would be sorry if he did.

RUTH. Oh, yes, miss, I should be sorry to part with Tom!

JENNY. Then I think it's only right to tell you that the foolish fellow talks about enlisting for a soldier, and if he does it at all, he will do it to-night.

RUTH [*with some emotion*]. Oh, miss, for that, I do like Tom very much indeed; but if he wants to 'list, of course he's his own master, and, if he's really fond of me what does he want to go and 'list for? [*Going to cry.*] One would think he would like to be where he could talk to me, and look at me — odd times! I'm sure I don't want Tom to go and 'list!

JENNY. Then take the advice of an old lady, who knows something of these matters, and tell him so before it's too late — you foolish, foolish girl! Ah, Ruth, I've no right to be hard on you! I've been a young and foolish girl like yourself in my time, and I've done many thoughtless things that I've learnt to be very sorry for. I'm not reproaching you — but I'm speaking to you out of the fullness of my experience; and take my word for it, if you treat poor Tom lightly, you may live to be very sorry for it too! [*Taking*

her hand.] There, I'm not angry with you, my dear, but if I'd taken the advice I'm giving you, I shouldn't be a lonely old lady at a time of life when a good husband has his greatest value. [*Ring.*] Go and see who's at the gate!

[*Exit Jenny. Ruth goes to the gate, wiping her eyes on her apron — she opens it.*]

[*Enter Spreadbrow (now Sir Henry).*]

SPREADBROW. My dear, is this Mr. Braybrook's?

RUTH. Yes, sir.

SPREADBROW. Is he at home?

RUTH. No, sir, he is not; but mistress is.

SPREADBROW. Will you give your mistress my card? [*Feeling for his card case.*] Dear me, I've left my cards at home — never mind — will you tell your mistress that a gentleman will be greatly indebted to her, if she will kindly spare him a few minutes of her time? Do you think you can charge yourself with that message?

RUTH. Mistress is in the garden sir; I'll run and tell her, if you'll take a seat. [*Exit Ruth.*]

SPREADBROW. That's a good girl! [*He sits on seat.*] I couldn't make up my mind to pass the old house without framing an excuse to take a peep at it. [*Looks round.*] Very nice — very pretty — but, dear me, on a very much smaller scale than I fancied. Remarkable changes in thirty years! [*Rises and walks round tree, looking about and finishing his speech down stage,* L.C.] Why the place is a town, and a railway runs right through it. And this is really the old garden in which I spent so many pleasant hours? Poor little Jenny! — I wonder what's become of her? Pretty little girl, but with a tendency to stoutness; if she's alive, I'll be bound she's fat. So this is Mr. Braybrook's, is it? I wonder who Braybrook is — I don't remember any family of that name hereabouts. [*Looking off.*] This, I suppose, is Mrs. Braybrook. Now, how in the world am I to account for my visit?

[*Enter Jenny; she curtseys formally, he bows.*]

SPREADBROW. I beg your pardon, I hardly know how to explain this intrusion. Perhaps I had better state my facts, they will plead my apology: — I am an old Indian civilian, who, having returned to England after many years' absence, is whiling away a day in his native place, and amusing himself with polishing old memories — bright enough once, but sadly tarnished — sadly tarnished!

JENNY. Indeed? May I hope that you have succeeded?

SPREADBROW. Indifferently well — indifferently well. The fact is, I hardly know where I am, for all my old landmarks are swept away; I assure you I am within the mark when I say that this house is positively the only place I can identify.

JENNY. The town has increased very rapidly of late.

SPREADBROW. Rapidly! When I left, there were not twenty houses in the place, but [*Politely.*] that was long before your time. I left a village, I find a town — I left a beadle, I find a mayor and corporation — I left a pump, I find a statue to a borough member. The inn is a "Palace Hotel Company" — the almshouse a county jail — the pound is a police station, and the common a colony of semi-detached bungalows! Everything changed, including myself — everything new, except myself — ha, ha!

JENNY. I shall be glad to offer you any assistance in my power. I should be a good guide, for I have lived here thirty-two years!

SPREADBROW. Thirty-two years! is it possible? Then surely I ought to know you? [*He feels for his glasses.*] My name is Spreadbrow — Sir Henry Spreadbrow!

JENNY. Spreadbrow! [*Putting on spectacles.*] Is it possible? Why, my very dear old friend, [*Offering both her hands.*] don't you recollect me?

SPREADBROW. [*He puts on his double eye-glass, takes both her hands.*] God bless me! — is it possible! — and this is really you! — you don't say so! Dear me, dear me! Well, well,

well! I assure you I am delighted, most unaffectedly delighted, to renew our friendship!

[*Shaking hands again; they sit under tree*, C.; *look at each other curiously*.]

SPREADBROW [L.]. Not changed a bit. My dear Jane, you really must allow me. [*They shake hands again*.] And now tell me, how is Mr. Braybrook?

JENNY [R., *rather surprised*]. Oh, Mr. Braybrook is very well; I expect him home presently; he will be very glad to see you, for he has often heard me speak of you.

SPREADBROW. Has he indeed? It will give me the greatest — the very greatest possible pleasure, believe me, [*Very emphatically*.] to make his acquaintance.

JENNY [*still surprised at his emphatic manner*]. I'm sure he will be delighted.

SPREADBROW. Now tell me all about yourself. Any family?

JENNY [*puzzled*]. I beg your pardon?

SPREADBROW. Any family?

JENNY. Mr. Braybrook?

SPREADBROOK. Well — yes.

JENNY. Mr. Braybrook is a bachelor.

SPREADBROW. A bachelor? Then let me understand — am I not speaking to Mrs. Braybrook?

JENNY. No, indeed you are not! Ha, ha! [*Much amused*.] Mr. Braybrook is my nephew; the place belongs to him now.

SPREADBROW. Oh! Then, my dear Jane, may I ask who you are?

JENNY. I am not married ——

SPREADBROW. Not married!

JENNY. No; I keep house for my nephew.

SPREADBROW. Why, you don't mean to sit there and look me in the face and tell me, after thirty years, that you are still Jane Northbrook?

JENNY [*rather hurt at the mistake*]. Northcott.

SPREADBROW. Northcott, of course. I beg your pardon —

I should have said Northcott. And you are not Mrs. Braybrook? You are not even married! Why, what were they about — what were they about? Not married! Well, now, do you know I am very sorry to hear that. I am really more sorry and disappointed than I can tell you. [*She looks surprised and rather hurt.*] You'd have made an admirable wife, Jane, and an admirable mother. I can't tell you how sorry I am to find that you are still Jane Northbrook — I should say, Northcott.

JENNY. The same in name — much changed in everything else. [*Sighing.*]

SPREADBROW. Changed? Not a bit — I won't hear of it. I knew you the moment I saw you. We are neither of us changed. Mellowed perhaps — a little mellowed, but what of that? Who shall say that the blossom is pleasanter to look upon than the fruit? Not I for one, Jane — not I for one.

JENNY. Time has dealt very kindly with us, but we're old folks now, Henry Spreadbrow.

[*Rises and goes down a little,* R.]

SPREADBROW. I won't allow it, Jane — I won't hear it. [*Rises.*] What constitutes youth? A head of hair? Not at all; I was as bald as an egg at five-and-twenty — babies are always bald. Eyesight? Some people are born blind. Years? Years are an arbitrary impertinence. Am I an old man or you an old woman, because the earth contrives to hurry round the sun in three hundred and sixty-five days? Why, Saturn can't do it in thirty years. If I had been born on Saturn, I should be two years old, ma'am — a public nuisance in petticoats. Let us be thankful that I was not born on Saturn. No — no, as long as I can ride to cover twice a week, walk my five-and-twenty miles without turning a hair, go to bed at twelve, get up at six, turn into a cold tub and like it, I'm a boy, Jane — a boy — a boy!

JENNY. And you are still unmarried?

SPREADBROW. I? Oh dear, yes — very much so. No time to think of marriage. Plenty of opportunity, mind, but no leisure to avail myself of it. I've had a bustling time of it, I assure you, Jane, working hard at the Bar and on the Bench, with some success — with some success; [*Sits again.*] and now that I've done my work, I throw myself back in my easy chair, fold my hands, cross my legs, and prepare to enjoy myself. Life is before me, and I'm going to begin it. Ha, ha! And so you are really Jane Northcott still?

JENNY. Still Jane Northcott.

SPREADBROW. I'm indignant to hear it — I assure you that I am positively indignant to hear it. You would have made some fellow so infernally happy; [*Rises.*] I'm sorry for that fellow's sake — I don't know him — but still I am sorry. Ah, I wish I had remained in England. I do wish, for the very first time since I left it, that I had remained in England.

JENNY. Indeed! And why!

SPREADBROW. Why? Because I should have done my best to remove that reproach from society. I should indeed, Jane! Ha, ha! After all, it doesn't much matter, for you wouldn't have had me. Oh, yes! you had no idea of it; but, do you know, I've a great mind to tell you — I *will* tell you. Do you know I was in love with you at one time? Boy and girl, you know — boy and girl. Ha, ha! *you'd* no idea of it, but I was!

JENNY [*in wonder*]. Oh, yes; I knew it very well.

SPREADBROW [*much astonished*]. You knew it? You knew that I was attached to you!

JENNY. Why, of course I did!

SPREADBROW. Did you, indeed! Bless me, you don't say so! Now that's amazingly curious. Leave a woman alone to find *that* out! It's instinctive, positively instinctive. Now, my dear Jane, I'm a very close student of human nature, and in pursuit of that study I should like above all things

to know by what signs you detected my secret admiration for you. [*Takes her hand.*]

JENNY. Why, bless the man! There was no mystery in the matter! You told me all about it!

SPREADBROW. I told you all about it?

JENNY. Certainly you did — here, in this garden.

SPREADBROW. That I admired you — loved you?

JENNY. Most assuredly! Surely you've not forgotten it. [*He drops her hand.*] *I* haven't.

SPREADBROW. I remember that I had the impertinence to be very fond of you. I forgot that I had the impertinence to tell you so. I remember it now. I made a fool of myself. I remember it by that. I told you that I adored you, didn't I? — that you were as essential to me as the air I breathed — that it was impossible to support existence without you — that your name should be the most hallowed of earthly words, and so forth. Ha, ha! my dear Jane, before I'd been a week on board, I was saying the same thing to a middle-aged governess, whose name has entirely escaped me. [*She has exhibited signs of pleasure during the earlier part of this speech, and disappointment at the last two lines.*] What fools we make of ourselves!

JENNY. And of others!

SPREADBROW. Oh, I meant it, Jane; I meant every word I said to you.

JENNY. And the governess?

SPREADBROW. And the governess! I would have married you, Jane.

JENNY. And the governess?

SPREADBROW. And the governess! I'd have married *her*, if she had accepted me — but she didn't. Perhaps it was as well — she was a widow with five children — I cursed my destiny at the time, but I've forgiven it since. I talked of blowing out my brains. I'm glad I didn't do it as I've found them useful in my profession. Ha! ha! [*Looking*

round, crossing to R.; *Jenny stands* C., *watching him, her back to the audience.*] The place has changed a good deal since my time — improved — improved — we've all three improved. I don't quite like this tree though — it's in the way. What is it? A kind of beech, isn't it?

JENNY. No, it's a sycamore.

SPREADBROW. Ha! I don't understand English trees — but it's a curious place for a big tree like this, just outside the drawing-room window. Isn't it in the way?

JENNY. It *is* rather in the way.

SPREADBROW. I don't like a tree before a window, it checks the current of fresh air — don't you find that?

JENNY. It *does* check the current of fresh air.

SPREADBROW. Then the leaves blow into the house in autumn, and that's a nuisance — and besides it impedes the view.

JENNY. It is certainly open to those objections.

SPREADBROW. Then cut it down, my dear Jane. [*Crossing round behind tree to* L.] Why don't you cut it down?

JENNY. Cut it down! I wouldn't cut it down for worlds! That tree is identified in my mind with many happy recollections. [*Sits.*]

SPREADBROW. Remarkable the influence exercised by associations over a woman's mind. Observe — you take a house, mainly because it commands a beautiful view. You apportion the rooms principally with reference to that view. You lay out your garden at great expense to harmonize with that view, and having brought that view into the very best of all possible conditions for the full enjoyment of it, you allow a gigantic and wholly irrelevant tree to block it all out for the sake of the sentimental ghost of some dead and gone sentimental reality! Take my advice and have it down. If I had had anything to do with it, you would never have planted it. I shouldn't have allowed it!

JENNY. You had so much to do with it that it was planted there at your suggestion.

SPREADBROW. At mine? Never saw it before in my life.

JENNY. We planted it together thirty years ago — the day you sailed for India.

SPREADBROW. It appears to me that that was a very eventful day in my career. We planted it together? I have no recollection of having ever planted a gigantic sycamore anywhere. And we did it together! Why, it would take a dozen men to move it.

JENNY. It was a sapling then — you cut it for me.

SPREADBROW [*suddenly and with energy*]. From the old sycamore in the old garden at Hampstead! Why, I remember; I went to London expressly to get it for you. [*Laughing, sitting on her left.*] And the next day I called to say good-bye and I found you planting it, and I helped; and as I was helping I found an opportunity to seize your hand. [*Does so.*] I grasped it — pressed it to my lips — [*Does so.*] and said, "My dear, dear Jenny," [*He drops her hands suddenly.*] and so forth. Never mind *what* I said — but I meant it — I meant it! [*Laughs heartily; she joins him, but her laughter is evidently forced; eventually she shows signs of tears, which he doesn't notice.*] It all comes back with a distinctness which is absolutely photographic. I begged you to give me a flower — you gave me one — a sprig of geranium.

JENNY. Mignonette.

SPREADBROW. *Was* it mignonette? I think you're right — it was mignonette. I seized it — pressed it to my trembling lips — placed it next my fluttering heart, and swore that come what might, I would never, never part with it! I wonder what I did with that flower! — And then I took one from my button hole — begged you to take it — you took it, and — ha, ha, ha! — you threw it down carelessly on the table, and thought no more about it, you heartless creature — ha, ha, ha! Oh, I was very angry! I remember it perfectly; it was a camellia.

JENNY [*half crying, aside*]. Not a camellia, I think.

SPREADBROW. Yes, a camellia, a large white camellia.

JENNY. I don't think it was a camellia; I rather think it was a rose.

SPREADBROW. Nonsense, Jane — come, come, you hardly looked at it, miserable little flirt that you were; and you pretend, after thirty years, to stake your recollection of the circumstance against mine? No, no, Jane, take my word for it, it was a camellia.

JENNY. I'm sure it was a rose!

SPREADBROW. No, I'm sure it was a camellia.

JENNY [*in tears*]. Indeed — indeed it was a rose.

[*Produces a withered rose from a pocket-book; he is very much impressed; looks at it and at her, and seems much affected.*]

SPREADBROW. Why, Jane, my dear Jane, you don't mean to say that this is the very flower?

JENNY. That is the very flower! [*Rising.*]

SPREADBROW. Strange! You seemed to attach no value to it when I gave it to you; you threw it away as something utterly insignificant; and when I leave, you pick it up, and keep it for thirty years! [*Rising.*] My dear Jane, how like a woman!

JENNY. And you seized the flower I gave you — pressed it to your lips, and swore that wherever your good or ill fortune might carry you, you would never part with it; and — and you quite forget what became of it! My dear Harry, how like a man!

SPREADBROW. I was deceived, my dear Jane — deceived! I had no idea that you attached so much value to my flower.

JENNY. We were both deceived, Henry Spreadbrow.

SPREADBROW. Then is it possible that in treating me as you did, Jane, you were acting a part?

JENNY. We were both acting parts — but the play is over, and there's an end of it. [*With assumed cheerfulness, crossing to* L.] Let us talk of something else.

SPREADBROW. No, no, Jane, the play is *not* over — we will talk of nothing else — the play is not nearly over. [*Music in orchestra*, "*John Anderson, my Jo.*"] My dear Jane — [*Rising, and taking her hand.*] My very dear Jane — believe me, for I speak from my hardened old heart, so far from the play being over, the serious interest is only just beginning. [*He kisses her hand — they walk towards the house.*]

CURTAIN

THE GIBSON UPRIGHT[1]

By BOOTH TARKINGTON
and HARRY LEON WILSON

CHARACTERS

NORA GORODNA, *a factory employee.*
MIFFLIN.
GIBSON, *a piano manufacturer.*
CARTER
FRANKEL
SHOMBERG } *factory employees.*
SIMPSON
SALVATORE
RILEY, *a truck-driver.*
ELLA, *a housemaid.*
MRS. SIMPSON.
POLENSKI, *a factory employee.*
FIRST WORKMAN.
SECOND WORKMAN.

ACT I

Andrew Gibson's office in his piano factory, where he manufactures "The Gibson Upright." A very plain interior; pleasant to the eye, yet distinctly an office in a factory, and without luxuries; altogether utilitarian.

Against the wall on our right is a roll-top desk, open, very neat, and in the center of the writing-pad a fresh rose

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stands in a glass of water. Near by is a long, plain table and upon it a very neat arrangement of correspondence and a couple of ledgers.

Against the walls are a dozen plain cane-seated chairs. Near the center of the room is a sample of the Gibson upright piano in light wood. There is a large safe, showing the word "Gibson," and there are filing cases. In the rear wall there is a door with the upper half of opaque glass, which shows "Mr. Gibson" in reverse; and near this door is a water-filter upon a stand. In the wall upon our left is a plain wooden door. The rear door opens into the factory; the other into a hall that leads to the street.

Upon the walls are several posters, one showing "The Gibson Upright" — a happy family, including children and a grandparent, exclaiming with joy at sight of this instrument. Another shows a concert-singer singing widely beside "The Gibson Upright," with an accompanist seated. Another shows a semi-colossal millionaire, and a workingman of similar size in paper cap and apron, shaking hands across "The Gibson Upright," and, printed: "$188.00 — The Price for the Millionaire, the Same for Plain John Smith — $188.00." This poster and the others all show the slogan: "How Cheap, BUT How Good!"

Nothing is new in this room, but everything is clean and accurately in order. The arrangement is symmetrical.

As the curtain rises, Nora Gorodna is seen at work on the sample "Gibson Upright." The front is not removed; but through the top of the piano she is adjusting something with a small wrench. Nora is a fine-looking young woman, not over twenty-six; she wears a plain smock over a dark dress. As she is a piano-tester in the factory, she is dressed neither so roughly as a working woman nor perhaps so fashionably as a stenographer. She is serious and somewhat preoccupied. From somewhere come the sounds of several pianos being tuned. After a moment, Nora goes thoughtfully to the desk and looks at the rose in the glass;

then lifts the glass as if to inhale the odor of the rose, but abruptly alters her decision and sets the glass down without doing so. She returns quickly and decisively to her work at the piano, as if she had made a determination.

A bell at the door on our left rings. Nora goes to the door and opens it.

NORA. Good morning, Mr. Mifflin.

MIFFLIN [*entering*]. Good morning, Miss Gorodna.

[*Mifflin is a beaming man of forty, with gold-rimmed eyeglasses and a somewhat grizzled beard which has been, a week or so ago, a neatly trimmed Vandyke. He wears a "cut-away suit," not much pressed, not new; a derby hat, a standing collar, and a "four-in-hand" dark tie; hard, round cuffs, not link cuffs. He carries a folded umbrella, not a fashionable one; wears no gloves; and has two or three old magazines and a newspaper under his arm.*]

MIFFLIN. I believe I'm here just to the hour, Miss Gorodna.

NORA. Mr. Gibson has been very nice about it. He told me he would give you the interview for your article. He's in the factory — trying to settle some things he *can't* settle. I'll let him know you're here.

[*She goes out by the door into the factory. Mifflin, smiling with benevolent anticipation, places his umbrella and hat on a chair, then takes his fountain-pen and a pencil from his pocket, smilingly decides to use the pencil, sharpens it without going to a waste-basket over by the desk; then beamingly looks about the room. He is about to strike a chord on the piano, seems alarmed by the idea, moves away from it, dusts the lapel of his coat, adjusts his collar, studies the posters, shakes his head over them as if they were not to his taste, goes to the desk, and after studying it smiles at the rose and gives it a kittenish peck with his forefinger. Nora comes back and Mifflin turns to her with his benevolent smile.*]

NORA [*going back to her work at the piano*]. He'll be right here.

[*Gibson appears in the open doorway, speaking with crisp determination to some one not seen.*]

GIBSON. That's my last word on it; that's in accordance with the agreement you signed two weeks ago.

A HARSH VOICE. We don't care nothin' about no agreement!

GIBSON. That's all!

[*He comes in. He is a man of thirty-something; well but not clubbishly dressed; an intelligent, thoughtful face; a man of affairs. Just now he is exercising some self-control over irritations which have become habitual, but he is not uncordial, merely quiet, during his greeting of Mifflin.*]

NORA. This is Mr. Mifflin, Mr. Gibson.

GIBSON. How do you do, Mr. Mifflin.

MIFFLIN [*heartily, as they shake hands*]. I am very glad to meet you, Mr. Gibson! I hope you don't mind my not writing to you myself for this interview.

GIBSON. Not at all!

MIFFLIN [*taking a chair*]. I heard Miss Gorodna speak at a meeting two nights ago ——

GIBSON. Yes?

MIFFLIN. And learning that she was one of your employees, I asked her to speak to you about it for me.

GIBSON. I see.

MIFFLIN. Now, in the first place, Mr. Gibson ——

[*There is a telephone on Gibson's desk; its bell rings.*]

GIBSON. Excuse me a moment! [*At the telephone.*] Hello! . . . Yes — Gibson. . . . Oh, hello, McCombs! . . . Yes. I want you to buy it. . . . I want you to buy all of that grade wire you can lay your hands on. Get it now and go quick. All you can get; I don't care if it's a three years' supply. There'll be a shortage within a month. . . . No; I don't want any more of the celluloid mixture. . . . No, I don't want it. They can't make a figure good enough. I've got my own formula for keys and we're going to make

our own mixture.... I'm going to have my own plant for it right here. I can make it just under fifty per cent better than I can buy it.... Wait a minute! I want you to get hold of that lot of felt over in Newark; the syndicate's after it, but I want you to beat them to it. Don't go to Johnson. You go to Hendricks — he's Johnson's brother-in-law. You tell him as my purchasing agent you've come to finish the talk I had with him the other night. You'll find that does it.... All right. Wait! Call me up to-morrow afternoon; I'm on the track of a stock of that brass we've been using. We may get three-eighths of a cent off on it. I'll know by that time. All right!... All right! [*Then he hangs up the receiver and turns to Mifflin.*] Where do you propose to publish this interview, Mr. Mifflin?

MIFFLIN [*cheerily*]. Oh, I shall select one of the popular magazines in sympathy with my point of view in these matters. You probably know my articles. Numbers of them have been translated. One called "Coöperation and Brotherhood" has been printed in thirteen languages and dialects, including the Scandinavian. But I expect this to be my star article.

GIBSON. Why?

MIFFLIN. Because your factory here is so often called a model factory. "*The* model factory!"

[*He repeats the phrase with unction.*]

GIBSON [*wearily*]. Yes, model because it has the most labor trouble!

MIFFLIN [*enthusiastically*]. That is the real reason why it will be my star article. As you may know from my other articles, this problem is where I am in my element.

GIBSON. Yes; I understood so from Miss Gorodna.

[*Giving him an inimical glance, Nora closes the top of piano and moves to go. Gibson checks her with a slight gesture.*]

GIBSON. Would you mind staying, Miss Gorodna? Miss

Gorodna knows more about one side of this factory than I do, I'm afraid, Mr. Mifflin. We may need her for reference, especially as she seems to be the ringleader of the insurgents.

MIFFLIN [*with jovial reproach*]. Now, now! Before we come to that, Mr. Gibson, suppose we get at the origin of this interesting product. [*He waves to the sample piano.*] Let's see! I understand it was never your own creation, Mr. Gibson; that you inherited this factory from your father.

GIBSON. Oh, no, I didn't.

NORA [*challenging*]. *What!* [*She checks herself.*] I beg your pardon!

GIBSON. The piano factory I inherited from my father was about one third this size.

MIFFLIN [*genially; always genial*]. Nevertheless, you inherited it. We know that everything grows with the times, naturally. Let us simply state that it was a capitalistic family inheritance.

NORA [*under her breath but emphatically*]. Yes!

MIFFLIN. Up to the time of your inheriting it, you, I suppose, had led the usual life of pleasure of the wealthy young man?

GIBSON. I'd been through school and college and through every department of the factory. That wasn't hard; it was a pretty run-down factory, Mr. Mifflin.

MIFFLIN. And then at your father's death the lives and fortunes, souls and bodies of all these workmen passed into your hands?

GIBSON. Not quite that; there were only forty-one workmen, and nineteen of them didn't stay when father died. They got other jobs before I could stop them.

MIFFLIN. And how many men have you now?

GIBSON. I believe there are one hundred and seventy-five on the pay roll now.

MIFFLIN. One hundred and seventy-five [*with gusto*] laborers!

GIBSON. Some of them are; some of them are orators.

MIFFLIN [*jovially*]. Ah, I'm afraid that's hard on Miss Gorodna.

GIBSON [*quietly*]. She's both.

MIFFLIN. I understand you are *not* fighting the labor unions?

GIBSON. No. The workmen themselves declined to unionize the factory.

MIFFLIN. Mr. Gibson, when your father began manufacturing "The Gibson Upright" ——

GIBSON. He didn't. He made a very fine piano — and only a few of them. It was "The Gibson Upright" that saved the factory. You see, with this model we began to get on a quantity-production basis. That's why the business has grown and is growing.

MIFFLIN. You mean that "The Gibson Upright" is the reason for the present great prosperity of this plant?

GIBSON. Yes.

MIFFLIN. Now be careful, Mr. Gibson; I'm going to ask a trap question. [*Wagging his pencil at him.*] What is the reason for "The Gibson Upright?"

GIBSON. Do you mean who designed it?

MIFFLIN. Oh, no, no, no! I mean who *makes* them? If some one asked you if you're the man that makes "The Gibson Upright," wouldn't you say "Yes"?

GIBSON. Certainly!

MIFFLIN [*triumphantly*]. Ah, there you fell into the trap!

GIBSON. What's the matter?

NORA [*with controlled agitation*]. It's the same old matter, Mr. Gibson. It's those men out there that make the piano.

GIBSON [*a little sadly*]. Do they?

NORA. With their *hands*, Mr. Gibson!

GIBSON. Is there anything more, Mr. Mifflin?

MIFFLIN. You couldn't possibly imagine how much you've given me, Mr. Gibson, in these few little answers. It is precisely what I want to get at — the point of view! The

point of view is all that is separating the classes from the masses to-day. And I think I have yours already. Now I want to go to the masses if you will permit me.

GIBSON. Then you might as well stay here.

MIFFLIN. Ah, but I want to hear the workers talk!

GIBSON. Well, this is the best place for that! Some of them are waiting now just outside the door. I'll let you hear them.

[*Goes to the factory door and opens it; two workingmen come in. One is elderly, with gray mustache and beard — Carter. The other, Frankel, is a Hebraic type, eager and nervous; younger.*]

GIBSON. What do you and Frankel want, Carter?

CARTER [*moving his jaw from side to side, affecting to chew to gain confidence*]. Well, Mr. Gibson, to come down to plain words — there ain't no two best ways o' beatin' about the bush.

GIBSON. I know that.

CARTER. The question is just up to where there ain't no two best ways out of it. The men in our department is going to walk out to the last one, and if there was any way o' stoppin' it by argument, I'd tell you. We're goin' out at twelve o'clock noon to-day, the whole forty-eight of us.

GIBSON. Why?

FRANKEL. "*Why*," Mr. Gibson! Did you want to know *why?*

GIBSON. Yes, I do. You men signed an agreement with me just eleven days ago ——

FRANKEL [*hotly protesting*]. But we never understood it when we signed it. How'd we know what we was signing?

GIBSON. Can't you read, Frankel?

FRANKEL. What's reading got to do with it, when it reads all one way?

GIBSON. Didn't you understand it, Carter?

CARTER. Well — I can't say I did.

GIBSON. *Why* can't you say it? It was plain black and white.

CARTER. Well, I was kind o' foggy about the overtime.

GIBSON. The agreement was that you were to have time and a half for overtime. What was foggy about that?

CARTER. Well, I don't say you didn't give us what we was askin' right *then;* but things have changed since then.

GIBSON. What's changed in eleven days?

FRANKEL [*hotly*]. What's changed? How about them men in the finishin' department that do piecework?

GIBSON. Well, what's changed about them?

FRANKEL. Well, something *is* goin' to change over there.

GIBSON. We're talking about your department not understanding the agreement. What's the finishing department got to do with that?

FRANKEL. Well, they're kickin', too, you bet!

GIBSON. I'm dealing with your kick now.

CARTER. Well, o' course we got to stand with them; if they do piecework overtime, they don't get no more for it.

GIBSON. I'll deal with them separately.

FRANKEL. My goodness, Mr. Gibson, you got to deal with us, too! Not a one of us understood what our last agreement with you was. It's just agreements and agreements and agreements — you might think we was living just on agreements! By rights we ought to have double time instead of time and a half!

GIBSON. Time and a half eleven days ago; now you strike for double time! Where does this thing stop? You want double time for overtime; your working day has been reduced; it won't be long till you want that cut down again.

FRANKEL. Sure! We want it cut down right now!

CARTER. Yes, Mr. Gibson; that was another point they told us to bring up before we walk out.

GIBSON [*with growing exasperation*]. I suppose you want a six-hour day so you'll have more overtime to double on me! Then you'll want a four-hour day, won't you?

MIFFLIN [*beaming and nodding*]. Well, why not, Mr. Gibson?

GIBSON. What?

NORA. Why shouldn't they?

GIBSON. Why shouldn't they? But what's their limit?

NORA [*oratorically*]. When the workman shall own his tools!

MIFFLIN. Of course that means *all* the tools, Mr. Gibson. You may not know our phrase: "The workman shall own his tools." It means not only the carpenter's bench, the plane and the saw, the adze and the auger, but the shop itself. It means that the workmen shall own the factory. It means the elimination of everything and every one who stands between him and the purchaser, to take toll and unearned profit from the worker, who is really the sole producer of wealth.

NORA. It means the elimination of capital and the capitalist!

MIFFLIN. It means that not only should the worker own tools and factory but should sit here in the persons of his chosen and elected fellow workers, as arbiter of his own destiny.

GIBSON. That is to say, it means the elimination of me.

MIFFLIN [*jovially*]. Precisely! Precisely!

GIBSON [*as another workingman strides into the room*]. What do you want, Shomberg?

SHOMBERG. Them new windows in the assembling room — they're no good.

GIBSON. We've just spent twelve hundred dollars fixing them as you said you wanted them. What's the matter with them?

SHOMBERG. They don't give no light.

MIFFLIN. None at all?

SHOMBERG. It's right next to none at all! The men are goin' to lay off if they got to work in that room. They're goin' out anyway at twelve o'clock.

FRANKEL. Now look here, Mr. Gibson, if I was running this factory ——

GIBSON. You're not, Frankel!

SHOMBERG. Well, why can't you listen to him? Don't we even get no hearing? I guess if I was running this factory once, the first thing I'd do I'd anyhow try to listen what the troubles is and make my men contented.

GIBSON. What would you do if you were running the factory, Carter? You haven't said.

CARTER. I ain't had the chance to say. Now what I'd do, first I'd settle all the grievances so there wouldn't be no more complaints.

GIBSON. Well, here's one coming I might leave to you on that basis.

[*Enter Simpson, an elderly worker in overalls and jumper; and Salvatore, a New Yorkized Italian type, a formerly lighted cigarette dangling from his lips.*]

SALVATORE. Our department's goin' to walk out at twelve, noon, Mr. Gibson. We ain't satisfied.

GIBSON. Why not?

SALVATORE. Well, we ain't satisfied, Mr. Gibson; we ain't satisfied at all.

GIBSON. You got every demand answered yesterday, Salvatore.

SALVATORE. Oh, I ain't talkin' about no demands. If all them other departments walks out, we're going to stand by 'em! We got plenty to do with our time. Workin' all the time ain't so enjoyable.

GIBSON. So you people are going out again, are you?

SIMPSON. I guess it's a general strike, Mr. Gibson. I'm afraid if you don't give the boys satisfactory answers, the place will close down at noon.

GIBSON. Have satisfactory answers ever satisfied you?

SALVATORE. Ain't we got no right to stand up for our rights?

FRANKEL. Don't you get all you can from *us?* Well, you bet your life we're goin' to keep on gettin' all we can from *you!*

GIBSON. Then life isn't worth anything to either of us — if it's all fight! Is that to go on forever?

NORA. No, Mr. Gibson; it's to go on until the abolition of the wage system!

MIFFLIN. Good!

NORA. The struggle with capitalism will continue till the workers take possession of the machinery of production. It is theirs by right; the wealth they produce is morally their own. The parasites who now consume that wealth must be destroyed.

[*Great approval from workmen; almost a cheer. Mifflin chuckles and noiselessly claps his hands.*]

GIBSON. I'm the parasite!

SHOMBERG. Well, do we get any answer?

GIBSON. Does any one of you men here think he could answer all of these demands satisfactorily?

SALVATORE. Sure! [*All acquiesce, "Sure, sure!"*]

FRANKEL. You can't put us off any longer with just no little bunch of funny talk!

GIBSON. I'll have an answer for you in fifteen minutes. [*Turns to his desk.*] That's all.

SHOMBERG. Better have it before twelve o'clock.

CARTER [*as they go*]. Do what you kin, Mr. Gibson. All the departments is worked up pretty unusual.

GIBSON [*wearily dropping back into his chair*]. Oh, no, Carter; pretty usual; that's the trouble.

MIFFLIN. A splendid manifestation of spirit, Mr. Gibson! I'll just take advantage of the ——

[*Gibson waves his hand, assenting. Mifflin overtakes the group at door, puts his hands on the shoulder of two of the workers; and goes out with them talking eagerly. Nora follows. Gibson sighs heavily; the telephone bell rings. He takes up the receiver.*]

GIBSON. Who is it? . . . Wait a minute! [*He takes a pad and writes*]: "Central Associated Lumber Companies." . . . Wait a minute. [*Looks at a slip in a pigeonhole of his desk.*]

Oh, yes, you called me yesterday. . . . This is Mr. Ragsdale? . . . No, no, Mr. Ragsdale, I don't think I'm going to do any business with you. You asked me forty-eight dollars a thousand on 200,000 feet. . . . No, your coming down half a dollar a thousand won't do it. . . . I say seventeen cents won't do it. . . . Hold the wire a minute. [*Looks for letter in pigeonhole, but finds it in his inside pockets. Then he holds it open, looking at it beside the telephone as he speaks.*] Hello! . . . No; I was right; there's nothing doing, Mr. Ragsdale; I know where I can get that 200,000 feet at forty-five dollars. . . . I say I know where I can get that lumber at forty-five dollars. . . . No; I can get it. There won't be any use for you to call up again. . . . Good-bye!

[*He paces the floor again thoughtfully, then abruptly goes to the factory door; opens it and calls.*]

GIBSON. Miss Gorodna!

[*Nora appears in the doorway. She looks at him with disapproving inquiry; then walks in and closes the door. He goes to his desk and touches the rose.*]

GIBSON. Why didn't you take it this morning? That poor little rosebed in my yard at home; it's just begun to brighten up. I suppose it thought it was going to send you a June rose every day, as it did last June. You don't want it?

NORA [*gently, but not abating her attitude*]. No, thank you!

GIBSON [*dropping the rose upon his blotting-pad, not into the glass again*]. This is the fourth that's had to wither disappointed.

NORA [*in a low voice*]. Then hadn't you better let the others live?

GIBSON. I'd like to live a little myself, Nora. Life doesn't seem much worth living for me as it is, and if your theories are making you detest me, I think I'm about through.

NORA. It's what you stand for that my theories make me detest — since you used the word.

GIBSON. Well, what is it that I stand for?

NORA. Class and class hatred.

GIBSON. Which class is the hatred coming from?

NORA. From both!

GIBSON. Just in this room right now it seems to be all on one side. And lately it has seemed to me to be more and more not so much class as personal; because really, Nora, I haven't yet been able to understand how a girl with your mind can believe that you and I belong to different classes.

NORA. You don't! So long as capital exists you and I are in warring classes, Mr. Gibson.

GIBSON. What are they?

NORA. Capitalist and proletariat. You can't get out of your class and I don't want to get out of mine.

GIBSON. Nora, the law of the United States doesn't recognize any classes — and I don't know why you and I should. We both like Montaigne and Debussy. You've even condescended to laugh with me at times about something funny in the shop. Of course not lately; but you used to. In everything worth anything aren't we really in the same class?

NORA. We are not. We never shall be — and we never were! Even before we were born we weren't! You came into this life with a silver spoon. I was born in a tenement room where five other people lived. My father was a man with a great brain. He never got out of the tenements in his life; he was crushed and kept under; yet he was a well-read man and a magnificent talker; he could talk Marx and Tolstoi supremely. Yet he never even had time to learn English.

GIBSON. I wish you could have heard what *my* father talked for English! Half the time I couldn't understand him myself. He was Scotch.

NORA. Your father wasn't crushed under the capitalistic system as mine was. My father was an intellectual.

GIBSON. Mine was a worker. They both landed at Castle Garden, didn't they?

NORA. What of that? Mine remained a thinker and a revolutionist; yours became a capitalist.

GIBSON. No; he got a job — in a piano factory.

NORA. Yes, and took advantage of the capitalistic system to own the factory.

GIBSON. Before he did own it, he worked fourteen hours a day for twelve years. That's why he owned it.

NORA. How many hours a day do you work, Mr. Gibson?

GIBSON. I *have* worked twenty-four; sometimes fourteen, sometimes two; usually six.

NORA. In other words, when you want to work.

GIBSON. I've learned to do things my father never learned to do, and it commands a higher return.

NORA. You *take* a higher return!

GIBSON. You mean I don't deserve it?

NORA. Can it be possible that you think you deserve as much as any of these *workers?* You don't so much as touch one of these pianos that bring you your return. I do! I work on them with my hands. Do you think you deserve as much as I?

GIBSON. No; I don't go so far as that.

NORA. Don't talk to me as a woman! My work is pleasant enough now; but what work did I have to do before I got this far? I worked sixteen hours a day, and when I was only a child at that! Twelve hours I was sewing, and four I studied. If my father hadn't known music and taught me a little, your capitalistic system would have me sewing twelve hours a day still!

GIBSON. Yes, Nora; when we learn how to do something, we get better pay for it.

NORA. We do? Do you really think that? That we get paid for what we do?

GIBSON. Yes; that's what I think.

NORA. Then what do you get paid for? For nothing in the world but owning this factory. You're paid because you're a capitalist!

GIBSON. Is that all?

NORA. Why, look at the state the factory's in! The discontent you saw in those men — that's the fault of the capitalistic system! There aren't twenty workmen in the place that are contented.

GIBSON. You're right about that; and they never will be.

NORA. Not until the system's changed. What are you going to do about it?

GIBSON [*with quiet desperation*]. They've driven me as far as they can. If they walk out, I'll walk out. I can stand it if they can.

NORA. You'd close down? Your only solution is to take the bread out of these men's mouths?

GIBSON. If they walk out, I'll walk out!

NORA [*trembling*]. You coward!

GIBSON. That's fair?

NORA. You'll let us starve because you haven't the courage to come to the right solution! Don't you mind starving us?

GIBSON. You mean you'd starve if I quit.

NORA [*vehemently*]. No; but because you'd close the factory.

GIBSON. Oh, the factory could run if I quit, could it?

NORA. That's the capitalist! They think it's capital that runs the factories!

GIBSON. And I'm the capital, am I?

NORA. What in the world else? [*Touches the piano.*] You think you produce this wealth because you've got your money in it? You pass out a pittance to those who do produce it; and when they ask for more than a pittance, you take their tools away from them! If they rebel, you set the police on them. That's capital — and that's you, Mr. Gibson!

GIBSON. Nora, you told me not to speak to you as a woman.

NORA. I mean it!

GIBSON. I'm going to disregard it. Couldn't you get your theories out of your mind for a while and make a little room there for me?

NORA. My theories! I haven't any theories! I'm talking about the truth, and the truth is my whole life. I can't find room for anything but the truth.

GIBSON. Couldn't you?

NORA. Ah, that's a man's egoism! With the whole world seething so that its wrongs should fill every mind — yes, and every heart — until they're righted, you ask me ——

GIBSON. I think you needn't make it any clearer, Nora; I understand.

NORA [*turning away, agitated*]. I am glad you do.

[*The factory door opens to the impetuous arrival of a workingman of extraordinary size and vehemence, Riley, a truck-driver.*]

RILEY [*as he opens the door*]. See here, Mr. Gibson, fer the love o' heaven, don't the truck-drivers fer this factory git no consideration?

GIBSON. I don't know! What do they want?

RILEY. Look here, Mr. Gibson, man to man, every department in this factory is makin' demands and goin' to walk out if they don't git 'em. Ain't we got no chance fer no demands?

GIBSON. I said: What do you want?

RILEY. Why, we got grievances been hangin' over I don't know how long!

GIBSON. What are they?

RILEY. Why, all them other departments is going to git raises. You don't think fer a minute the truck-drivers ain't going to ——

GIBSON. How much raise do you want?

RILEY. Sir?

GIBSON. How much raise do you want?

RILEY. I can't jest say right this minute. We jest heard what was goin' on in the other departments, and we ain't had no meetin' to settle just what raise we *are* goin' to git. Now, Mr. Gibson, if I was runnin' this factory ——

GIBSON. Well, what would you do?

RILEY. The first thing I'd do, I'd see that the truck-drivers didn't have no more discontent than nobody else. What becomes of your freight if you can't run no trucks? You got to look out, Mr. Gibson! It's us got the upper hand.

GIBSON. Go call your meeting and find out what raise you're going to strike for.

RILEY. Yes, sir; I'll do it. [*He goes out quickly.*]

NORA [*amazed and rather gentle*]. Are you going to give them what they want?

GIBSON. No; I only wanted to get rid of him a minute to think — or try to.

NORA [*in a low voice, offended*]. Oh, excuse me!

[*She is going out.*]

GIBSON. Stay here! [*He seems to approach a decision — one of desperation and anger. Then he speaks crisply, but more to himself than to Nora.*] All right — they get it! [*Looks up at Nora; gives her a frowning stare of some duration.*] Tell Riley to call off his meeting, please. I want all those spokesmen for the departments here. I'll give them their answer now.

[*Nora looks at him, puzzled, bites her lip, and goes out quickly into the factory. Gibson's expression is determined; so is his action. He goes to the wall, brings two chairs, one in each hand, places them at the large table. Repeats this until he has chairs placed at the table on both sides and at the head as if for a directors' meeting. The door opens and Salvatore, Mifflin, Carter, Riley, Shomberg, Frankel, and Simpson enter. They come in, speaking together; most of them talking somewhat ominously.*]

CROWD. Well, he better! . . . We ain't workin' for our health. . . . My whole department'll walk out! . . . You bet your life we're goin' to! . . . He needn't kid himself about our not meaning business!

FRANKEL. Well, Mr. Gibson, we'd like to know what conclusion you come to.

GIBSON. I'm going to tell you. Simpson, please ask Miss Gorodna to step in. [*Simpson merely looks out of the door, and Nora comes in quickly.*] Carter, take that chair at the head of the table. Frankel, Salvatore, Shomberg, sit there, and there, and there. Riley, sit there. Simpson, there! Miss Gorodna, will you please sit here? [*They take the seats he indicates, but they look puzzled, somewhat perturbed; whisper and murmur to one another.*] Thank you! There! That looks like a directors' table, doesn't it?

SALVATORE. What's this all about?

GIBSON. I want to ask you people if any of you ever knew me to break my word to you?

FRANKEL. Oh, no, Mr. Gibson, we know you never break your agreements!

GIBSON. I want to ask you people: Haven't you found my word as good as my bond?

CARTER. Why, yes, Mr. Gibson.

SIMPSON. Sure! We know you'll do what you say.

GIBSON. Do you all agree to that?

SALVATORE. Soit'nly! You're a gentleman.

RILEY. Sure, we agree to it!

SHOMBERG. Oh, well, prob'ly so.

GIBSON. All right! I'm going to do something you don't expect, and I want you to know I mean it. But before I do it, I want to tell you something. Probably you won't understand it, but for a long time I had a pride in this factory. Building up The Gibson Upright was really the pride of my life. To do that I knew I had to have a loyal staff of workmen, and for that reason if no other I have given you shorter hours and more pay than the men get in any other factory of this kind that I know of. I've done everything that can be done to make the shops healthy and light and clean. I certainly haven't been unfriendly to you personally. Any man in the factory was free to come in that door to talk to me any time he wanted to. I've done my best and we've been called the model factory.

I've done my best but — it isn't enough. It never has been enough. And I've been told it never will be enough [*with a glance at Nora*] until the wage system has been abolished — until capital has been abolished and the parasite destroyed! I say I took a pride in the factory for years! Now I am no longer able to. I can't take a pride in a squabble, and that's all this factory has come to be. And I'll tell you frankly — you men feel you'd like to get rid of me; well, I want to get rid of you. And I intend to!

SHOMBERG [*fiercely*]. You goin' to close this factory down?

GIBSON. No; I'm going to give it to you!

SEVERAL WORKMEN. What!

GIBSON [*emphatically*]. I'm going to give it to you! I turn it over to you, here and now. This property is mine, but the use of it is yours. Don't you understand? You've said yourselves my word is as good as my bond. Well, the factory is yours. I'm going to get away from it. You take it and run it. [*He gets his hat and coat.*]

SIMPSON. What in thunder does he mean?

SALVATORE. Say, what's the game?

GIBSON. There it is! Take it and run it yourselves, for yourselves. It belongs to every workman in the factory on equal shares. [*Throws keys on table.*] There are the keys of the safe, and the combination's in the top drawer of that desk. It's all yours as it stands, down to the very correspondence on that table, without any let, hindrance, or interference from me.

FRANKEL [*hoarsely*]. Say! He means it!

SALVATORE. All the money ours?

GIBSON. The money for every piano you make and sell is yours — every cent of it.

MIFFLIN [*rising transfigured*]. Gentlemen, a glorious time has come! This is an example to every employer of labor in our land. I thank that power which destined all men to be equal both in service and reward that I should have chanced to be present to see such a splendid band of

forward-looking fellows — of brothers, of comrades — come into their own! Let us hope that this great moment but marks the beginning of an epoch when every capitalist and manufacturer shall see the light as Mr. Gibson has just done.

As spokesman for these — these men, Mr. Gibson, I would congratulate you for anticipating the inevitable and certain world future! You have done well for yourself to perceive it. I am sure on that account you leave here with their respect. And to you I should think it might be some relief ——

GIBSON. Relief? I should think it might! And you can translate that into your nineteen languages and dialects — including the Scandinavian! As for you men — you wouldn't work for me — now see if you can work for yourselves! Good-bye, Miss Gorodna!

[*Nora, who has been looking at him tensely, inclines her head slightly. He opens the door that leads to the street and goes out decisively. There are exclamations from every one, loud but awed. "Say, look here, look here, look here!"*

"Give it to us!" "Equal shares! Did you hear what he said?" "Gosh! Is this the end of the world?" "My wife won't believe it!"]

MIFFLIN. Gentlemen, this factory comes into the possession of every workman in it on equal terms; each has a like share in the profits. At last the workman owns his tools.

FRANKEL [*suddenly, as if light had just come*]. Gibson's crazy!

MIFFLIN. No, no! He saw the writing on the wall!

NORA [*as if entranced, her eyes to heaven*]. Isn't it wonderful — wonderful!

MIFFLIN [*beaming*]. But we mustn't forget that it entails responsibilities.

NORA. We mustn't forget that.

[*The telephone bell rings. They all turn their heads in silence and look at it, Mifflin watching them, benevolently chuckling. The bell rings again.*]

CARTER [*blankly*]. The telephone is ringin'.

MIFFLIN. Well, answer it, answer it!

SIMPSON. Who?

MIFFLIN. Why, you — any of you. It's yours — it's your telephone.

SIMPSON. You answer it, Carter.

[*Carter goes to the telephone and picks it up in a somewhat gingerly way.*]

CARTER. Hello! . . . Yes. . . . Yes, it's The Gibson Upright. . . . No, he ain't here. . . . What? Wait a minute. [*Puts his hand over the mouthpiece.*] He wants to know who it is talking.

FRANKEL. My goodness! Can't you tell him it's you?

CARTER. He wouldn't know who that was.

MIFFLIN. Tell him it's one of the owners of the company.

CARTER [*looks at Mifflin solemnly; then in a hushed voice*]. It's one of the owners of the company. . . . Wait a minute; let me get that. "The Central Associated Lumber Companies?" I hear you. Wait a minute. [*Looks round.*] This here company says they want to lower their bid for a couple hundred thousand feet o' lumber to forty-seven dollars a thousand. They say that's a dollar lower than they offered yesterday and a half a dollar lower than they offered this morning — says got to know now.

FRANKEL. Says they come *down* to forty-seven, do they?

CARTER. Yes; says so!

SIMPSON. Well, tell 'em that's good; we'll take it.

THE OTHERS. Sure, that's right! . . . That's a good offer. . . . Sure, we'll take it!

CARTER [*at the telephone*]. We'll take it. [*Pause.*] You're welcome.

[*Puts down the telephone amid general buzz from all the others. They rise somewhat dazedly, but relaxing, beginning to take in their surroundings in the new life. Shomberg and Simpson shake hands. Frankel goes over and examines the safe. Salvatore*

picks up a basket of correspondence from the desk as if it were a strange bug. Shomberg opens a drawer in the table. There is a buzz of congratulative, formless talk. They spread over the stage, looking at everything.]

MIFFLIN [*transfigured, his right hand lifted*]. Gentlemen, this is the New Dawn!

CURTAIN

ACT II

The yard beside Gibson's house. Upon our left is seen the porch or sun-room wing of a good "colonial" house of the present type. A hedge runs across at the back, about five feet high, with a gateway and rustic gate. Beyond is seen a residential suburban quarter, well-wooded and with ample shrubberies. A graveled path leads from the gate to the porch, or sun-room, where are broad steps. Upon the lawn are a white garden bench, a table, and a great green-and-white-striped sun-umbrella, with several white garden chairs.

Autumn has come, and the foliage is beginning to turn; but the scene is warm and sunlit.

After a moment, a young housemaid brings out a tray with a chocolate-pot, wafers, and one cup and saucer and a lace-edged napkin. She places the tray on the table, moves a chair to it, looks at the tray thoughtfully, turns, starts toward the house — when Gibson comes out. He wears a traveling suit and is bareheaded.

ELLA. The cook thought you might like a cup of chocolate after a long trip like that — just getting off the train and all, Mr. Gibson.

GIBSON. Thank you, Ella, I should.

ELLA. I'll bring your mail right out.

[*She goes into the house and returns with a packet of letters.*]

GIBSON. Thanks, Ella!

ELLA. Everything is there that's come since you sent the telegram not to forward any more.

GIBSON. It's pleasant to find the house and everything just as I left it.

ELLA. My, Mr. Gibson, we pretty near thought you wasn't never coming back. Those June roses in that bed round yonder lasted pretty near up into August this year, Mr. Gibson. For that matter it's such mild weather even yet some say we won't have any fall till Thanksgiving.

GIBSON. Yes, it's extraordinary.

ELLA. Shall I leave the tray?

GIBSON. No; you can take it. [*She moves to do so.*] Wait a minute. Here's a letter from John Riley, up at the factory. Don't I remember his son Tom coming here to see you quite a good deal?

ELLA. Yes, sir; Tom's one of the factory truck-men like his father. He still comes to see me quite a good deal, sir. There isn't anything about that in the letter, is there, sir?

[*She knows there isn't.*]

GIBSON [*absently*]. No, no! [*With faint irony.*] He only wants to know about where to get a stock of truck parts that had been ordered before I broke connections with the factory. He thinks four months is a long time for them to be on the way and doesn't know where to write.

ELLA. He's a terrible active man, Mr. Riley. Always pushing.

GIBSON. So Tom comes round more than ever, does he?

ELLA [*coyly*]. He does, sir!

GIBSON. I'm not going to lose you, am I, Ella?

ELLA. Well, sir, up to the time of that change in the factory, we hadn't expected we could get married for maybe two years yet, but the way things are now — not that I want

to leave here, sir — but it does look like going right ahead with the wedding!

GIBSON. Tom feels that prosperous, does he?

ELLA. I guess he *is* prosperous, sir!

GIBSON [*gravely digesting this*]. Well, I suppose I'm glad to hear it.

ELLA. Yes, sir; everybody's glad these days up at the factory, sir. I don't mean about just Tom and me, they're glad.

GIBSON. You mean they're all in a glad condition?

ELLA. Oh, *are* they, sir! Even the Commiskeys got an automobile last month!

GIBSON. Well, I suppose that's splendid.

ELLA. Didn't you know about it, sir?

GIBSON. No, not a word. I've been pretty deep up in the Maine woods this summer. Have you been over to the factory at all yourself, Ella?

ELLA. Yes, sir; visitors can go round just as they like to. They're glad to have you.

GIBSON. When you've been over there, Ella — you know which one is Miss Gorodna, don't you?

ELLA. Oh, yes, sir! She's one of the best in managing, Miss Gorodna.

GIBSON. You — did you — have you happened to see her?

ELLA. Yes, sir, once or twice.

GIBSON. Did she — ah — did she look overworked?

ELLA. Oh, I shouldn't say so, sir.

GIBSON. She looked well, then?

ELLA. Yes, indeed, sir! Everybody's so happy up there; I don't suppose none of 'em could look happier than she is, sir!

GIBSON. They are all happy, then?

ELLA [*laughing joyfully*]. You never see such times in your life, sir! [*A bell rings in the house.*] I'll answer the bell.

GIBSON. I've finished this, Ella.

ELLA. Yes, sir.

[*She takes the tray and goes into the house. Gibson opens another letter, reads it. Ella returns.*]

ELLA. It's Mr. Mifflin, sir.

GIBSON. All right.

[*Mifflin, beaming and bubbling, more radiant than in Act I, but dressed as then except for a change of tie, comes from the house. He carries his umbrella and hat and the same old magazines and a newspaper.*]

MIFFLIN. Ah, Mr. Gibson, you couldn't stay away any longer!

GIBSON. How de do! Sit down!

MIFFLIN [*effervescing, as they sit*]. It's glorious! I heard from your household you were expected back this Sunday. Now confess! You couldn't stay away! You had to come and watch it!

GIBSON. Well, I've not had to come and watch it for four months. I don't expect to watch it much, now.

MIFFLIN. You don't mean to sit there and tell me you don't know anything about it!

GIBSON. No; I don't know anything about it.

MIFFLIN. Mr. Gibson, you're an extraordinary man!

GIBSON. No, I'm not. What I did was extraordinary, but I was only an ordinary man pushed into a hole.

MIFFLIN. Oh, no; surrendering the factory was merely normal. What's remarkable is your staying away from watching the glorious work these former hireling workmen of your factory are doing, now they've won their industrial freedom. Myself, I've taken rooms near by: I started to do one article; now I have a series. And oh, the glory of watching these comrades with their economic shackles off! Haven't you heard anything of our success?

GIBSON. Only a word from my housemaid.

MIFFLIN [*delightedly, pinning him*]. Aha! There! What did she say? "Only a word"; but what was it?

GIBSON. It indicated — prosperity.

MIFFLIN. Ah! Immense prosperity, didn't it?

GIBSON. I suppose so. Success, at any rate.

MIFFLIN. Success? It's so magnificent that now it's inevitable for every factory of every kind all over this country.

GIBSON. All over the country?

MIFFLIN. Not only all over this country! The world must do it. Ah, they've done it in a country larger than this already! And these comrades right here are showing our country what it means. I don't begrudge you some credit for having begun it, Mr. Gibson. But you only anticipated what all owners everywhere are going to have to do before the workmen simply *take* the factories. They're going to take them because they have the inherent right; and they're going to take them *now*, either by direct action or by the technical owners, like yourself, seeing the handwriting on the wall.

GIBSON. What do you mean by direct action?

MIFFLIN. Why, just taking them!

GIBSON. By force?

MIFFLIN [*deprecatingly but affably*]. Oh, we hope the theoretical owners won't reduce them to such extremes. There might be a few cases that law-abiding citizens would regret; but that isn't the big thing. Our work here is so far perhaps on the small scale, but it shows — it shows — that everything must be on a coöperative basis!

GIBSON. Everything? My house, too?

MIFFLIN [*beaming*]. Your house, too.

GIBSON [*amiably*]. How about your gold eye-glasses?

MIFFLIN [*laughing*]. Those will be given me by the state. But seriously, aren't you coming to pay us a visit at the factory?

GIBSON. Since you ask me — what's the best time? I suppose the whistle doesn't blow as early as it used to.

MIFFLIN [*laughing pityingly*]. Whistle! Oh, my dear sir! This only confirms me in my old idea that the technical

owners didn't have practical minds. You don't suppose we abolished you, and then didn't abolish the whistle? That whistle hurt self-respect. Really I'm sorry it's Sunday and I can't take you over there this minute to see the great changes. Talk about collectivism! That factory is the most interesting place in the world to-day. When the men were working eight long hours a day under a master, it was all repression, reserve; their individualities were stifled. Now they expand!

GIBSON. You mean they talk a good deal?

MIFFLIN. I never have been in a place where there was so much talk in my life. They talk all the time; it shows they are thinking.

GIBSON. Isn't it noisy?

MIFFLIN [*delighted*]. It is! Every man has his own ideas and he expresses them. It means a freshness and originality in the work that never got into it before.

GIBSON [*worried*]. Originality? You don't mean to say they've changed any of the features of The Gibson Upright.

MIFFLIN. Oh, no; it's the same piano — and yet different! I almost feel I could tell the difference by looking at one. There's no change; yet now it has character. And those men — those men, Mr. Gibson — it's brought out *their* character so! They're thinking all the time.

GIBSON. They're working, too, of course?

MIFFLIN. Working! You never saw men work under the old capitalistic régime, Mr. Gibson! Don't think that this work is the driven, dogged thing it was when they had to. This is work with dignity, with enthusiasm, with spontaneity!

GIBSON [*rising, very thoughtful*]. Well, I ought to hope that it is, of course! [*He walks to and fro a moment, then comes and rests his hands on the back of a chair, looking at Mifflin.*] Mr. Mifflin, I went into this with open eyes. I was angry at the time, but I had thought of it often. And when I went out, I went out! Now I've kept away and I don't

intend to do any prying — as a matter of fact, I'm only back here for two or three days — but I have some natural curiosity, especially about certain particulars.

MIFFLIN. Everything is as open as the sunlight — no capitalistic secret machinations. Ask anything you like!

GIBSON. Well, then, do you happen to know what are the profits for these four months?

MIFFLIN. Frankly, that's a detail I don't know. But I do know that every one is delighted and that the profits have been large.

GIBSON. And no friction among the men?

MIFFLIN. No — I — no, none at all; no friction; nothing that could be called friction at all.

GIBSON. Then it's a complete success?

MIFFLIN. Absolutely! Why, just let me picture it to you, Mr. Gibson. Don't you understand, these men are not hirelings now; they're comrades, a brotherhood! You should see them as they come from the factory in the warm afternoon sunshine. They stop in groups and continue discussions of matters of interest that have come up during the day. You hear the most eager discussion, such spirited repartee; and in the factory itself these groups gather at any time. When there may be some tiny bit of friction, it is disposed of amicably, comrade to comrade. And some of the wives of the workmen have taken the greatest interest! Imagine under the capitalistic régime a wife coming and sitting at her husband's side and taking up little matters of importance with him, as a wife should, while he worked! Oh, the wives have caught the idea, too! They're proprietresses just as much as their husbands are proprietors. And you can see how keenly they feel the responsibility and want to share in settling all questions that come up. Then they walk home with their husbands, talking it all over. Mr. Gibson, I tell you, sometimes it has moved me. More than once I have found my eyes moistening as I watched it.

GIBSON. And do you happen to know — well, haven't the men felt the need for a certain kind of general management of the institution's affairs?

MIFFLIN. Oh, that's all met — all met by meetings of the governing board, the committee.

GIBSON. No; I meant, hasn't any need been felt for a man with a certain specialized knowledge? Say, for instance, to deal with the purchasing of raw materials?

MIFFLIN [*somewhat vague and puzzled*]. I think they did do this through an individual for a time. I think the head bookkeeper was given charge of such matters; at least I think so. But probably they found that the creation of such an office was unnecessary. Purely clerical work. At least I haven't seen him about for several weeks.

GIBSON. Was he there on just one share of the profits?

MIFFLIN. Why, of course! That is the *sine qua non.*

GIBSON [*thoughtfully*]. I see. [*Paces up and down and halts again.*] So you say everybody is happy?

MIFFLIN. Radiant!

GIBSON. Everybody?

MIFFLIN [*beaming*]. Come and see!

GIBSON. Ah — Miss Gorodna seems to like it all, does she?

MIFFLIN. *Does* she!

GIBSON [*a little falsely*]. None of them are happier than she is, I suppose?

MIFFLIN. Miss Gorodna is the radiant, joyous sunshine of the whole place!

GIBSON [*somewhat ruefully*]. Well, that's pleasant news.

[*Ella appears from the house.*]

ELLA. It's that old Ed Carter from the factory, Mr. Gibson. He heard from Tom Riley you was expected back and he's come to call on you.

GIBSON. Tell him to come right out. [*Sees Carter beyond Ella.*] Come out here, Carter! Glad to see you!

[*They shake hands. Carter is unchanged as to head*

and whiskers, but wears a square-cut black frock-coat, or "Prince Albert," with trousers and waistcoat of the same material; old brown shoes, a derby hat, a blue satin four-in-hand tie.]

CARTER. How do you do, Mr. Gibson! I just thought I'd pay my respects, as Tom Riley passed the word round the factory you was coming back.

GIBSON. Sit down, sit down!

MIFFLIN [*exuberantly*]. How do you do, Carter, how do you do! [*They shake hands and Mifflin pats Carter on the shoulder.*] Look at him, Mr. Gibson! Look at him! Don't you see what the New Freedom has done for him? It's in his eye! That pride of liberty! It's in his step, in every gesture he makes. [*Carter strokes his whiskers.*] You're old friends — equal now, equal at last. I won't disturb you! [*Picks up his hat, magazines, and umbrella.*] He can give you more than I can, Mr. Gibson. Good afternoon! Good afternoon!

[*He goes out through the gate.*]

GIBSON. Sit down, Carter. Sit down! [*They sit.*] Well, is everything fine?

CARTER [*heartily*]. Yes, sir! It is, Mr. Gibson! Indeed it is! [*Glances with some little pride at his clothes.*] I couldn't of expected no finer. Fact is, I never could of asked for anything like this, even if I'd been a praying man.

GIBSON. Well, I'm glad to hear it, Carter!

CARTER. I knowed you would be, Mr. Gibson. It's all just wonderful the way things are working out!

GIBSON. Everything is working out just right, is it?

CARTER. Oh, I don't say everything! They's bound to be some little mites here and there. You know that yourself.

GIBSON [*grimly*]. Yes, I do! What are *your* little mites, Carter?

CARTER. Well, what mostly gits my goat is this here Simpson's wife, Mrs. Simpson.

GIBSON. What bothers you about Simpson's wife?

CARTER. Well, what I says, woman's place is the home, and this here Mrs. Simpson — I — I never could stand no loud, gabby woman!

GIBSON. You're not neighbors, are you?

CARTER. No! She spends all her days at the factory; you might think she was running the whole place! What's worse'n that, you know they elected me chairman o' the governing committee, and she's all the time trying to 'lectioneer me out. What she wants is to git Simpson in for chairman; that'd be jest same's her bein' chairman herself, the way she runs Simpson! That's the only thing that worries me. Everything else is just splendid, splendid!

GIBSON. I understand you don't blow the whistle any more. What hours are you working now?

CARTER. Well, first we thought we ought to work about six; but we got on such a good basis, a good many of them are talkin' how they think that's too much. It'd suit me either way. *That* ain't the trouble over at that factory, Mr. Gibson.

GIBSON. What is the trouble over at that factory?

CARTER [*with feeling*]. Mr. Gibson, it's the inequality. Look at me now, and look at Simpson. Simpson and his wife haven't got a child, and I got seven, every one of 'em to support, and my married daughter lost her husband and got a shock, and I got her and her three little ones pretty much on my hands. And Simpson draws down every cent as much as what I do; just exactly the same. And if the truth was told, he don't work as much as what I do. Then, look at them bachelors; they ain't got *nobody* to support! Well, that's got to be settled!

GIBSON. How are you going to settle it?

CARTER [*cheerfully*]. Oh, the committee meetin' settles everything by vote. I'd of put a motion about these matters at some o' the meetings long ago except I'm chairman and they worked a rule on me the chairman can't put motions. But some of us got it fixed up to git it put over at the

meeting to-morrow. That's the *big* meeting to-morrow — the monthly one. Don't misunderstand me, Mr. Gibson; I ain't makin' no complaint about these here details, because everything else is so splendid and prosperous it seems like this here New Dawn Mr. Mifflin called it in his article.

GIBSON. Nothing else worries you then, Carter?

CARTER. Nothing else in the world, Mr. Gibson. Except there might be some of 'em don't take their responsibilities the way I could wish. Fact is, there's so much talkin' gits to goin' over there sometimes you can't hear yourself work. Me? I'm an honest worker, if I work for you or work for myself. But I can't claim they're all that way. Some that used to loaf, you can't claim they don't loaf more than they did; yes, sir!

GIBSON. They get just the same as you do, though, don't they?

CARTER. Oh, yes! That's the *sinee que none;* it's the brotherhood between comrades. I don't mean to complain, but they's one thing that don't look to me just fair. It took me four years to learn my trade and I'm a skilled workman, and now some Hunnyacks that just sends strips along through a chute — and it's all they do know how to do — they used to git two and a half a day to my six, but this way we both git just the same. I says something about it didn't seem right to me, and one them Hunnyacks called me a boor-jaw. Well, then I talked to Miss Gorodna about it.

GIBSON. What did Miss Gorodna say?

CARTER. Miss Gorodna says: "But you both get enough, don't you?"

GIBSON. Well, don't you?

CARTER [*scratching his head*]. Yes, plenty; and it *sounds* all right, them and me gittin' the same; but I can't just seem to work it out in my mind how it *is* right. [*Cheering up.*] Mr. Mifflin says himself, though, it's just wonderful! And we certainly are makin' great money!

GIBSON. Then all you poor are getting rich?

CARTER. Yes; looks like we will be.

[*During these speeches, Nora has appeared, or rather her head and shoulders have, above the hedge. She has come along the hedge and now stands halting at the gate. She wears a becoming autumn dress and hat, in excellent taste; carries a slim umbrella. She has a beautifully bound book in her hand.*]

NORA [*opening the gate*]. Do you mind my coming in the side-gate, Mr. Gibson?

[*Gibson, startled by her voice, turns abruptly from Carter to stare at her, speaks after a pause, slowly.*]

GIBSON. No, I don't mind what gate you come in.

NORA [*coming down to join them*]. How do you do!

[*Gives him her hand.*]

GIBSON. How do you do!

CARTER [*on the other side of her*]. How do you do, Miss Gorodna!

NORA [*for a brief moment confused that she has not noticed Carter*]. Oh — oh, how do you do, Mr. Carter! [*Turns and shakes hands with him. She turns again, facing Gibson.*] I just heard you were here. I wanted to bring you this copy of Montaigne — if you'll forgive me for keeping it a year.

GIBSON. I gave it to you. Don't you — remember?

NORA. Yes, I — remember. But things were different then. Please. I think I oughtn't to keep it now. [*He takes it, places it gently upon the table; they sit facing each other; she speaks more cheerfully and briskly.*] I came to see you on a matter of business, too.

CARTER. Well, then, I'll just be ——

NORA. Oh, no! Please stay, Mr. Carter! It's a factory matter. [*Carter coughs and sits. Nora continues, not pausing for that.*] It was about that great stock of wire you had your purchasing agent buy just before the — before you went away, Mr. Gibson.

GIBSON. I'm glad to see you looking so well, Miss Gorodna.

NORA. Thank you! If you remember, you must have ordered him to buy all the wire of our grade that was in the market at that time. At any rate, we found ourselves in possession of an enormous stock that would have lasted us about three years.

GIBSON. Yes. That's what I wanted.

NORA. As it happened, it turned out to be a very good investment, Mr. Gibson, because in less than a month it had gained about nine per cent in value, and three weeks ago a man came to us and offered to take it off our hands at a price giving us a twenty-two per cent profit!

GIBSON. Yes; I should think he would.

NORA. So of course we sold it.

GIBSON [*checks an exclamation, merely saying*]. Did you?

NORA. Naturally we did! Twenty-two per cent profit in that short time! Now it just happens that we've got to buy some more ourselves, and we can't get hold of any, even at the price that we sold it, because it seems to have kept going up. I thought perhaps you might know where to get some at the price you bought the other, and you mightn't mind telling us.

GIBSON. No; I wouldn't mind telling you. I'd like to tell you.

NORA. You think there isn't any?

GIBSON. I'm sure there isn't any.

NORA. Then I'm afraid we'll have to get some back from the people we sold to. Of course I'm anxious to show the great financial improvement as well as other improvements. That's partly my province and Mr. Carter's, our committee chairman, besides our regular work.

GIBSON. Mr. Mifflin tells me that you had a sort of general manager for a while at first.

CARTER. Oh, that was Hill, the head bookkeeper. He left. He was a traitor to the comrades.

GIBSON. Hill? He knew quite a little about the business. Why did he leave?

CARTER. Why, that Coles-Hibbard factory went and offered him a big salary to come over there; more than he thought he could get coöperatin' with us.

NORA. Hill was always a capitalist at heart. We certainly haven't needed him!

CARTER. Oh, everybody was glad to get rid of Hill! Better off without him — better off without him!

GIBSON. I suppose it was really an economy, his going?

NORA [*smiling*]. It resulted in economy.

GIBSON. Have you made many economies?

NORA. Oh, a great many!

CARTER. Oh, my! Yes!

NORA. Economies! [*Her manner now is indulgent, amused, friendly, almost pitying.*] Mr. Gibson, have you any realization of what you threw away at that place? Don't be afraid; I'll never bring you the figures. I wouldn't do such a thing to anybody!

GIBSON. Do you think I was too lavish?

NORA. We couldn't believe it at first. Just what was being thrown away on advertising, for instance. The bill you paid for the last month you were there was five thousand dollars!

CARTER. That was the figger! It's certainly a good one on you, Mr. Gibson.

NORA. We cut that five thousand dollars down to *three hundred!* That was one item of forty-seven hundred dollars a month saved. Just one item!

CARTER [*hilariously*]. Quite some item!

NORA [*seriously and gently*]. Five thousand dollars a month to advertise a piano that sells for only a hundred and eighty-eight dollars!

CARTER. That's the facts!

NORA. Mr. Gibson, did you really ever have any idea what you were paying in commissions to agents?

GIBSON. Yes, I did.

NORA. Why, I can't believe it! Did you know that you

paid them twenty per cent on each piano? Over thirty-seven dollars!

GIBSON. Yes.

NORA. But wasn't it thrown away? I can't understand how you kept the factory going so long as you did, with such losses. Why, don't you know it amounts to hundreds of thousands of dollars a year? When we found it out, we couldn't see how you made both ends meet, and we thought there must have been some mistake, and you'd never realized what advantage these agents were taking of you.

GIBSON. Yes, I knew what they got.

NORA [*triumphantly*]. We cut those commissions from thirty-seven dollars — to *twelve!* And that's just one more item among our economies. Now do you wonder at the success we're making?

GIBSON. And your profits have been — satisfactory?

NORA. The very first month our profits were *four thousand dollars* more than the last month you were there!

GIBSON. That's the month you say you cut out four thousand seven hundred dollars' worth of advertising.

NORA. And the next month we cut down the commissions, and the profits were *five* thousand more!

GIBSON. But those were returns under the old commissions.

NORA. But last month, with new economies, we showed a larger profit than you had!

GIBSON. And this month?

NORA. We shan't know that until the report's read at the meeting to-morrow. I think it will be the largest profit of all.

CARTER. That bookkeeper's workin' on it to-day. Talked like he was going to cut us down two or three thousand, mebbe. [*Laughing.*] That's the way he always talks.

NORA. He isn't a good influence.

CARTER. No — too gloomy, too gloomy to suit me!

GIBSON. What about the two other bookkeepers?

CARTER. The committee voted them into the packing department; and they ain't much good even there. It's a crime!

NORA. They weren't needed. Our bookkeeping is so simplified since you left!

GIBSON. It all seems to be simplified, Miss Gorodna.

NORA. Yes; and whatever problems come up, they're all settled at our meetings.

[*A sound of squabbling is heard upon the street, growing louder as the people engaging in it approach along the sidewalk.*]

CARTER. There's one we got to bring up and do something about at the meetin' to-morrow.

GIBSON. What is it? [*Carter goes up to the gate.*]

NORA. It's that Mrs. Simpson; she's a great nuisance.

CARTER. Yes, it's her and Simpson and Frankel. The Simpsons moved into a flat right up in this neighborhood. Quite some of the comrades live up round here now.

[*Frankel and Mrs. Simpson are heard disputing as they approach: "Well, what you goin' to do about it!" "I'll show you what we're goin' to do about it!" "You can't do nothing!" "You wait till to-morrow and see." "I got my rights, ain't I?" and so on.*]

SIMPSON [*heard remonstrating*]. Now, Mamie, Mamie! Frankel, you oughtn't to talk to Mamie that way.

[*Gibson, interested and amused, goes part way up to the hedge. Nora is somewhat mortified as the disputants reach the gate. Gibson speaks to them.*]

GIBSON. How do you do, Simpson! How do you do, Mrs. Simpson! How do you do, Frankel! Won't you come in and argue here?

MRS. SIMPSON. Wha'd you say, Mr. Gibson?

GIBSON. I said come in; come in!

SIMPSON [*uncertainly*]. Well, I don't know.

GIBSON. Come in! Nobody here but friends of yours. Sit down. I'd like to hear what the argument was about.

[*Mrs. Simpson is a large woman, domineering and noisy, dressed somewhat expensively. She is proud of some new furs and a pair of quite fancy shoes. Simpson has a new suit of clothes and a gold-headed cane. Frankel wears a cheap cutaway suit and is smoking a cigar.*]

MRS. SIMPSON. I don't care who hears the argument! Right's right and wrong's wrong!

FRANKEL. You bet right's right, and so's my rights right!

MRS. SIMPSON. You ain't got any rights.

FRANKEL [*hotly to everybody*]. Do you hear she says I ain't got no rights at all?

MRS. SIMPSON. You ain't got the rights you claim you got.

FRANKEL. She comes down there and tries to run the whole factory. Ask any of 'em if she don't. Ask Carter!

MRS. SIMPSON. I own that factory just as much as anybody does.

SIMPSON. Now, Frankel, you be careful what you say to Mamie!

FRANKEL. I got shares in that factory and by rights ought to have as many votes at the meetin' as I got shares — let alone your talking about trying to root me out of my profits!

GIBSON. What's this about Frankel having shares?

FRANKEL [*violently*]. You bet your life I got shares! And I'm going to have my shares of the money at that meetin' to-morrow!

MRS. SIMPSON. You bet your life you ain't!

SIMPSON. You think we're goin' to vote all our profits away to you?

CARTER. Wait a minute! Ain't I the chairman of that ——

MRS. SIMPSON. You may be chairman yet — but not long!

FRANKEL [*sharply to Carter*]. You just try to rule me out once!

GIBSON. What's it all about?

MRS. SIMPSON. I'll soon enough tell anybody what it's about!

FRANKEL. You couldn't tell nothing straight!

CARTER [*deprecatingly*]. Now, now, this here's just one of our little side difficulties, you might say. What's the use to git huffy over it, we're gittin' along so well and all? The trouble is, some o' the men and their families ain't been used to so much prosperity and money in the house that way, all of a sudden. Of course some of 'em got to living too high and run into some debt and everything.

FRANKEL. Well, what business is that of yours? The factory ain't a Home, is it? And you ain't the Matron, are you?

CARTER. I don't claim such!

FRANKEL. It's my business, ain't it, if I take and live on the cheaps and put by for a rainy day, and happen to have money when other people need it from me?

SIMPSON. *That* much may be your business, but I reckon it was our business when you come blowin' round the factory, first that you owned seven shares besides your own; then, a week after, you says seventeen; then ——

GIBSON. Well, how many shares has he got?

SIMPSON. He was claimin' twenty-four yesterday.

MRS. SIMPSON [*violently*]. He's bought two more since last night. Now he claims twenty-six!

FRANKEL. Yes; and I *own* twenty-six!

CARTER. That ain't never goin' to do! I don't say it's a condition as you might say we exactly see how to handle right now, but the way it is, you certainly got us all disturbed up and hard to git at the rights of it. You claimin' all them shares ——

FRANKEL. Well, my goodness, you git the *work* fer them shares, don't you? What you yelpin' about?

CARTER. I don't say we don't git the same amount o' work, but ——

FRANKEL. Well, *how* you git it, that's my lookout, ain't it, so it's done?

CARTER. But you claim you got a right to draw out twenty-six profits!

FRANKEL. Sure I do when I furnish the labor for twenty-six. Am I crazy?

CARTER. But that way you're makin' more than any ten men put together in the whole factory!

FRANKEL. Ain't it just? What you goin' to do about it?

[*During this speech, Shomberg has come along the street and stands looking over the gate.*]

CARTER. Well, so fur, we ain't been able to see how to argue with you. It don't look right, and yet it's hard to find jest what to say to you.

FRANKEL. You bet it is!

CARTER. 'Course, that's one of the points that's got to be settled at the meeting to-morrow.

FRANKEL. You bet it'll be settled!

MRS. SIMPSON. If we had another kind of a chairman, it'd been settled long ago, and settled right!

CARTER. Now look here, Mrs. Simpson ——

FRANKEL [*passionately*]. I got twenty-six shares, and I earned 'em, too! [*To Gibson.*] Look at the trouble they make me — to git my legal rights, let alone the rest the trouble I got! [*Fiercely to Carter and to Simpson.*] Yes, I had twenty-four shares yesterday and I got twenty-six to-day and I might have another by to-night. Don't think I'm the only one that's got sense enough not to go smearin' his money all round on cheap limousines and Queen Anne dinin'-room sets at eighty-nine dollars per! [*Dramatically pointing at Shomberg.*] There's a man worth four shares right now! He had three and he bought Mitchell's out last night at Steinwitz's pool room. Ask him whether he thinks I got a right to my twenty-six profits or not!

SHOMBERG. You bet your life!

MRS. SIMPSON. I guess that Dutchman hasn't got the say-so, has he?

FRANKEL. No. *You* run the factory now, Mrs. Simpson!

CARTER. Now look here; this ain't very much like comrades, is it, all this arguin'? Sunday, too!

FRANKEL. Oh, I'm tryin' to be friendly!

CARTER [*to Gibson*]. This buyin' of shares and all has kind of introduced a sort of an undesirable element into the factory, you might say. That's kind of the bothersome side of it, and it can't be denied we would have quite a good deal of bothersomeness if it wasn't for our meeting.

NORA [*to everybody except Gibson*]. Don't you all think that these arguments are pretty foolish when you know that nothing can be settled except at the governing committee's meeting?

SIMPSON. That's so, Miss Gorodna. What's more, it don't look like as good comrades as it ought to. I don't want to have no trouble with Frankel. He might have the rights of it for all I know. Anyways, if he hasn't, I ain't got the brains to make out the case against him, and anyways, as you say, the meetin' settles all them things.

NORA. Don't you think you and Frankel might shake hands now, like good comrades?

FRANKEL [*with hostility*]. Sure, I'll shake hands with him!

SIMPSON. Well, I just as soon.

MRS. SIMPSON. Don't you do it, Henry!

SIMPSON. Well, but he's a comrade.

MRS. SIMPSON. Well, you can't help that! You don't have to shake hands with him.

SIMPSON. Well, consider it done, Frankel. Consider it done!

CARTER. That's right, that's right! We can leave it to the meeting.

SHOMBERG. You bet you can! You goin' my way, Frankel?

[*Frankel, joining him, speaks to Mrs. Simpson.*]

FRANKEL. I s'pose you're going to come to the meetin', Mrs. Simpson?

MRS. SIMPSON. Ain't my place where my husband is?

FRANKEL. Well, you don't git no vote!

MRS. SIMPSON. There's goin' to be a motion introduced for the wives *to* vote.

FRANKEL. Watch it pass! Good-bye, Mr. Gibson!

[*Gibson nods. Frankel goes away with Shomberg.*]

SIMPSON. Good-bye, Mr. Gibson! All this don't amount to much. It'll all be settled to-morrow.

MRS. SIMPSON. Good-bye, Mr. Gibson! [*And as they go out the gate.*] You bet your life it'll be settled! If that wall-eyed runt thinks he can walk over *me* ——

CARTER [*looking after them, laughing*]. Well, she's an awful interfering woman! And she ain't the only one. If they'd all stay home like my wife, things would be smoother, I guess. Still, they're smooth enough. [*Going.*] If you want to see that, Mr. Gibson, we'll be glad to have you look in at the meeting. You're always welcome at the factory and it'd be a treat to you to see how things work out. It's at eleven o'clock if you'd like to come.

GIBSON. Thanks, Carter.

CARTER. Well, good afternoon, Mr. Gibson and Miss Gorodna. Good evening, I should say, I reckon.

GIBSON. Good evening, Carter.

[*The light has grown to be of sunset. Carter goes.*]

NORA [*going toward the gate*]. I'm glad to see you looking so well. Good evening!

GIBSON. Oh, just a minute more.

NORA. Well?

GIBSON. It looks as if that might be a lively meeting to-morrow.

NORA. Is that the old capitalistic sneer?

GIBSON. Indeed it's not! It only seemed to me from what we've just heard here ——

NORA [*bitterly*]. Oh, I suppose all business men's meetings and arguments, when their interests happen to clash, are angelically sweet and amiable! Because you see that my comrades are human and have their human differences ——

GIBSON. Nora, don't be angry.

NORA. I'll try not. Of *course* it isn't all a bed of roses! Of *course* things don't run like oiled machinery!

GIBSON. But they do run?

NORA. It's magnificent!

GIBSON. Do you want me to come to that meeting to-morrow?

NORA. Yes; I'd like you to see how reasonable people settle their differences when they have an absolutely equal and common interest.

GIBSON [*in a low voice*]. Aren't you ever tired?

[*For a moment she has looked weary. She instantly braces up and answers with spirit.*]

NORA. Tired of living out my ideals?

GIBSON. No; I just mean tired of working. Wouldn't you rather stop and come here and live in this quiet house?

NORA [*incredulously*]. I?

GIBSON. Couldn't there even be a chance of it, Nora? That you'd marry me?

NORA [*amazed and indignant*]. A chance that I would ——

GIBSON. Well, then, wouldn't you even be willing to leave it to the meeting to-morrow?

[*Already in motion she gives him a look of terror and intense negation.*]

NORA. Oh! [*She runs from the gateway.*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

The scene is the same as the first, the factory office — with a difference. It is now littered and disorderly. Files have been taken from the cases and left heaped upon the large table and upon chairs. Piles of mail are on the desk and upon the table. The safe is open, showing papers in disorder and hanging from the compartments. Hanging upon the walls, variously, are suits of old overalls and men's coats

and hats. The chairs stand irregularly about the large table; a couple of old soft hats are on the water-filter. The former posters have been replaced by two new ones. One shows a brawny workman with whiskers, paper cap, and large sledge hammer leaning upon an upright piano. Rubrics: "The Freedom and Fraternity Coöperative Upright." "The Piano You Ought to Support." The other poster shows a workman with a banner upon which is printed: "No Capital! The Freedom and Fraternity Co-operative Upright. The Only Piano Produced by Toilers Not Ground by Capital. Buy One to Help the Cause!"

Nora is busily engaged at Gibson's desk. Her hat and jacket hang on the wall.

Carter enters, smoking a pipe; he wears overalls and jumper. He carries a heavy roll of typewritten sheets. Tosses this upon the table, glances at Nora, who does not notice him, divests himself of overalls and jumper, and puts on the black frock-coat which he wore in Act II. He looks at his watch and at the clock on the wall.

CARTER [*straightening out his coat*]. I thought it might look better to get on my Sunday clothes for the meeting, as you might say, Miss Gorodna. Being as I'm chairman it might look more dignified; kind o' help give a kind of authority, maybe.

NORA [*absently, not looking up*]. Yes.

CARTER [*looking at his watch and at the clock again*]. It ought to be wound up for meetings. [*He steps upon a chair; moves the hands of clock.*] There, doggone it, the key's lost! I believe Mrs. Simpson took that key for their own clock. [*He goes to the table; sits, unrolls the typewritten sheets, puts on his spectacles, and studies the sheets in a kind of misery, roughing his hair badly and making sounds of moaning.*] Miss Gorodna, can you make this figure out here for me? Does that mean profits — or what?

NORA. Oh, no; that's only an amount carried over.

CARTER. They's so many little puzzlin' things in this bookkeeper's report. I don't believe he understands it himself. I don't see how he expects me to read that to the meeting. Some parts I can't make head or tail of. Others it looks like he's got the words jest changed round.

NORA. Oh, we'll work it all out at the meeting, Mr. Carter!

CARTER. My, we got a lot to work out at this meeting.

NORA. We'll do it, comrade!

CARTER [*cheering up*]. Sure! Sure we will! It's wonderful what a meeting does; I'm always forgettin' all we got to do is vote and then the trouble's over.

[*Instantly upon this, a loud squabbling and women's voices are heard outside, in the factory.*]

NORA [*troubled*]. I was afraid this would happen. Of course after Mrs. Simpson came, other wives were bound to.

CARTER [*uneasily moving toward the door to the street*]. Well, I guess I better ——

[*The door into the factory is flung open by Mrs. Simpson, in a state of fury. Another woman's voice is heard for a moment, shouting: "Old Cat! Old She-Cat! Wants to be a Tom-Cat!"*]

MRS. SIMPSON. See here, Carter, if you still pretend to be chairman, you come out here and keep order!

CARTER. Now, Mrs. Simpson, you better go on home!

MRS. SIMPSON [*raging*]. *Me!* My place is right here, but I'm not going to stand this Commiskey woman's insults! She come down here this morning with her husband and started right in to *run* this factory. My heavens! Ain't she got five children at home? As long as you still pretend to be chairman, I demand you come out and tell this woman to go about her business.

SHREWISH VOICE. It *is* my business!

MRS. SIMPSON. I'll show you! I was here first; everything was going all right. Carter, are you going to come out here and do your duty like I said?

CARTER [*attempting sternness and failing*]. You shut that

door! I got to get this report in order before the meeting. I'm not comin'.

MRS. SIMPSON. Then I won't be responsible for what happens! She ain't the only one. Mrs. Shomberg is out here messin' things up, too. If you won't do your duty, there'll be direct action took here! [*She goes out violently.*]

CARTER. That's got to come up in meeting. It certainly has. These here wives! For example, my wife's an awful quiet woman, but you s'pose she's goin' to stand it when she hears about all these others? I'd like to keep her at home.

NORA. I just wonder ——

CARTER. What was you wondering, Miss Gorodna?

NORA. Well, if that's something the meeting can settle?

CARTER [*doggedly*]. Well, it's got to vote on it.

NORA. We did vote on Mrs. Simpson last meeting.

CARTER. Well, we got to vote on her and all the rest of 'em this time.

NORA. It didn't seem to settle Mrs. Simpson, did it?

CARTER. Well, it hadn't got so bad then. Now it's got to be settled! We got to git everything fixed up now.

[*A frightful dispute is heard in numerous male voices; some speaking Italian, some Yiddish, and some broken English. This grows louder as Frankel rushes in, throwing the door shut behind him and leaning against it, wiping his forehead.*]

FRANKEL. Life ain't worth livin'! Life ain't worth livin'!

CARTER. Serves you right, Frankel!

[*At the filter, Frankel pours water from the glass upon a dirty handkerchief and passes the handkerchief over his forehead.*]

FRANKEL. I got to git some *peace!* I got to collect myself.

CARTER. That shows you ain't got no rights like you claimed. You can't control your labor element.

FRANKEL [*bitterly*]. I'll control 'em all right! I'll show 'em who's their master!

[*A man's head with shaggy hair and ragged whiskers is thrust in at the factory door. This is Polenski.*]

POLENSKI [*ferociously*]. Are you goin' to come out here like a man?

FRANKEL. You *bet* I'm comin' out there, Polenski! I'll show you who's the man here! You Hunnyacks try to browbeat me!

[*As he goes out, babbling fiercely, the howls of a Roman mob are heard greeting him.*]

CARTER. I don't feel no sympathy with him.

NORA. No; I should think not!

[*A more distant outbreak of the mob is heard, brief but fierce; and just a moment before it ceases, Mifflin enters, beaming. He is dressed as usual, with his umbrella and the same old magazines and newspapers under his arm.*]

MIFFLIN. Everything is lovely! How do you do, Miss Gorodna! Carter, old fellow! It's a great morning, a great morning! Mr. Gibson drove me down in his car. It's wonderful to feel the inspiration it's going to be for an ex-capitalist to see this place and its harmony. My phrase for it is "harmonized industry." It will mark an epoch for him.

[*Gibson comes in. Mifflin greets him.*]

MIFFLIN. Ah, Mr. Gibson! You'll see a difference! You'll see a difference!

GIBSON. Yes, I do. Good morning, Miss Gorodna!

NORA [*just barely looking round*]. Good morning, Mr. Gibson.

MIFFLIN. I was just saying what an inspiration it's going to be for you to see what we're doing down here. [*Pats Carter's shoulder.*] These noble fellows are teaching us intellectuals a lesson. I keep going among them; what they're doing here keeps flowing into me. You'll get it, Mr. Gibson. You'll get it, too!

[*Beamingly he goes out into the factory.*]

CARTER [*cordially*]. Take a chair, Mr. Gibson. Make yourself right at home!

GIBSON. Thanks! [*He makes a grave tour of inspection of the place, his expression noncommittal; goes about casually without making a point of it; he writes his initials in the dust on a filing case. He turns and looks at Nora thoughtfully; she has not seemed to notice him.*] Do you think I will, Miss Gorodna?

NORA [*not looking up*]. Do I think you will what?

GIBSON. That I'll get what Mifflin meant? That it will be an inspiration to me to see this meeting?

NORA. I don't know what will be an inspiration to you.

GIBSON. I know one thing that is — a brave woman! [*The only sign she gives is that her head bends over her work just a little more.*] Carter, do you think this meeting is going to be an inspiration to me?

CARTER. Well, Mr. Gibson, since the time you give up our rights to us, as Mr. Mifflin says, we're an inspiration to the whole world. All the time! Yes, sir; and we *would* be, too, if we could jest git these dog-goned inequalities straightened out. We got this Frankel trouble on our hands, and them wives, and one thing and another, though they ain't botherin' me so much as my own rights. But they're goin' to git brought up in the meeting. You'll see!

GIBSON. Is the safe usually kept open?

CARTER [*heartily*]. Why, yes, sir; open to each and all alike.

GIBSON. Oh, yes, of course! Seems to be some business mail left over here.

CARTER. Oh, yes. But you'll find every one of 'em's been opened; we never miss opening a letter. You see they's checks in some of 'em.

GIBSON. I see. Then everything is running right along, is it, Carter?

CARTER. Oh, sure! Right along, right along!

[*The uproar breaks out again. Frankel bursts in,*

wiping his forehead as before. He hurries to the water-filter for more water.]

FRANKEL. By golly! The bloodsuckers! They want my life! They don't get it! Hello, Mr. Gibson! Well, I am pleased to see you! Say, Mr. Gibson, lemme say something to you. Look here a minute.

[*He draws Gibson aside.*]

GIBSON. What is it, Frankel?

FRANKEL [*hastily, in a low voice*]. Mr. Gibson, keep it under your hat, but I got a pretty good interest in this factory right now. What date I'm goin' to own it, I won't say. But what I want to put up to you: How much would you ask me to manage it for me?

GIBSON. What?

FRANKEL. I wouldn't be no piker; when it comes to your salary, you could pretty near set it yourself.

GIBSON. I'm afraid I've already had an offer that would keep me from accepting, Frankel.

FRANKEL. When the time comes, I'll git a manager somewhere; no place like this can't run itself; I seen that much.

GIBSON. Even if I didn't have an offer, Frankel, I doubt if I'd accept yours. You know I used to have some little trouble here.

FRANKEL. You got my sympathy now! I got troubles myself here. [*Hastily drinks another glass of water.*] Well where's that meeting? They're late, ain't they?

CARTER. If they are, it's your fault. Them wops of yours won't hardly let a body git by out yonder.

[*Salvatore and Shomberg come in from the factory, Salvatore pausing in the doorway to shout in the direction of an audible disturbance in the distance.*]

SALVATORE. Oh, shut up; you'll git your pay!

[*Following Salvatore come Simpson and his wife and Riley. They all speak rather casually but not uncordially to Gibson. Mifflin is with them, his hand on Simpson's shoulder. The outbreak outside sub-*

sides in favor of a speech of extreme violence in a foreign language. Italian, Yiddish, or whatever it is, it seems most passionate, and by a good orator. It continues to be heard as the members of the committee take their seats at the big table. Mifflin beams and nods at Gibson; and takes his seat with the committee.]

SHOMBERG [*hotly, to Mrs. Simpson*]. Here, you ain't a member of this committee! Git her chair away from her there, Salvatore! She's got no right here!

MRS. SIMPSON. Oh, I haven't?

SHOMBERG. Already twice this morning I got hell from my own wife the way this woman treats her tryin' to chase her out the factory. You think you're on this committee?

MRS. SIMPSON [*taking a chair triumphantly*]. My husband is. I was here last time, and I'm goin' to keep on.

CARTER [*referring to the speech in the factory*]. My goodness! We can't do no work.

RILEY. Frankel, that's your business to shut 'em up.

FRANKEL. Talkin' ain't doin' no harm. Let 'em talk.

RILEY. Yes, I will! [*Goes to the door, and roars.*] Cut that out! I mean business!

[*Shuts the door and returns angrily to his seat.*]

CARTER [*rapping on the table with a ruler*]. The meeting will now come to order! Minutes of the last meeting will now be read by the secretary.

MIFFLIN [*to Gibson, beaming*]. You see?

NORA [*rising, minute book in hand*]. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Carter, Monday the ——

SALVATORE. Aw, say!

FRANKEL. I object!

SIMPSON. What's the use readin' all that? It's only about what we done at the last meeting.

SALVATORE. We know that ourselves, don't we?

SHOMBERG. What'd be the use? What'd be the use?

RILEY. All we done was divide up the money.

SALVATORE. Cut it out, cut it out! Let's get to that!

CARTER. All right then. I move ——

MRS. SIMPSON [*shrilly*]. You can't move. The chairman can't move. If you want to move, you better resign!

CARTER. Well, then, somebody ought to move ——

MRS. SIMPSON. Cut out the moving. She don't *haf* to read 'em, does she?

CARTER. All right, then. Don't read 'em, Miss Gorodna.

SALVATORE. Well, git some kind of a move on.

CARTER. I was thinkin' ——

NORA [*prompting*]. The next order ——

CARTER. What?

NORA. The next order of business ——

CARTER. Oh, yes! The next order of business ——

NORA. Is reports of committees.

CARTER [*in a loud, confident voice*]. The next order of business is reports of committees. [*Takes up some papers and goes on promptly.*] The first committee I will report on is my committee. I will state it is very difficult reading, because consisting of figures written by the bookkeeper, and pretty hard to make head or tail of, but ——

MRS. SIMPSON. Oh, here, say! We got important things to come up here! 'Fore we know how much we're goin' to divide amongst us, we got to settle at once for all and for the last time how it's goin' to be divided and how much each family gets.

SALVATORE. *Family?*

CARTER AND SHOMBERG [*together*]. Yes — family!

RILEY. You bet — family!

CARTER. Yes, sir!

SIMPSON. You *bet* we'll settle how it's goin' to be divided!

SALVATORE. Why, even, of course; just like it has been. Ain't that the principle we struggled for all these years, comrades?

MRS. SIMPSON. Well, it's not goin' to be divided even no longer.

SALVATORE [*violently*]. Yes, it is!

SIMPSON AND CARTER [*hotly*]. It is not!

SALVATORE. You bet your life it is!

SHOMBERG. I'd sooner wring your neck, you sporty Dago!

SALVATORE. Now look here, comrade ——

SHOMBERG. Comrade! Who you callin' comrade? Don't you comrade me!

MRS. SIMPSON. You dirty little Dago! You got no wife to support! Livin' a bachelor life of the worst kind, you think you'll draw down as much as my man does?

SALVATORE [*fiercely*]. Simpson, I don't want to hit no lady, but if ——

SIMPSON [*roaring*]. Just you try it!

MIFFLIN [*rising in his place, still beaming, and tapping on the table with his fountain-pen*]. Gentlemen, gentlemen! This is all healthy! It's a wholesome sign, and I like to see these little arguments. It shows you are thinking. But, of course, it has always been understood that in any such system of ideal brotherhood as we have here, we, of course, cling to the equal distribution of all our labors. We ——

SALVATORE [*fiercely*]. We? How do you git in this? Where do you git this we stuff?

FRANKEL. Yes; what you mean — we?

SALVATORE. *You* ain't goin' to edge in here. Your kind's done that other places. Some soft-handed guy that never done a day's work in his life but write and make speeches, works in and gits workingmen to elect him at the top and then runs 'em just the same as any capitalist.

MIFFLIN [*mildly protesting*]. Oh, but you mustn't ——

SALVATORE [*sullenly*]. That's all right; I read the news from Russia!

MIFFLIN [*firmly beaming*]. But I was upholding your contention for an equal distribution.

SALVATORE [*much surprised and mollified*]. Oh, that's all right then; I didn't git you!

MIFFLIN. Right comrade! I'm always for the under dog.

SHOMBERG. Call *him* an under dog! He's a loafer and don't know a trade!

RILEY. He was gettin' three and a half a day, and now he draws what I do!

MRS. SIMPSON [*attacking Riley fiercely*]. Yes, and you're gettin' as much as my husband is, and your wife left you seven years ago and you livin' on the fat of the land; Steinwitz's pool parlour every night till all hours!

SHOMBERG [*attacking her*]. Yes, and you and your husband ain't got no children; we got four. I'd like to know what right you got to draw down what we do — you with your limousine!

CARTER. What business you got to talk, Shomberg? When here's me with my seven and the three of my married daughter — eleven in all, I got on my shoulders. Do you think you're goin' to draw down what *I'd* ought to?

ALL [*shouting*]. "Here! We got rights, ain't we?" "Where's the justice of it?" "I stand by my rights." "Nobody's goin' to git 'em away from me." "I bet I git *my* share." "Oh, dry up!" "You make me laugh!" And so on.

RILEY [*standing up and pounding the table, roaring till they are forced to listen*]. You ain't *any* of you got the rights of it! The rights of it is — Who does the most work gets the most money. Look at me on that truck!

CARTER [*pounding on the table with a ruler*]. You set down, Riley! The rights of it ain't who does the most work; but I'm willin' to leave it to who does the *hardest* work.

SIMPSON. No, sir! It's who does the *best* work.

CARTER. There ain't only three men in my department out there that ain't soldiering on their job. I do twice as much skilled work as any man at this table, and I do it better. [*Shouts of "Yes, you do!" "Rats!" "Shut up!"*] I'll leave it to Mr. Gibson; he knows good work if he don't know nothing else.

[*Shouts of "Leave it to nothing!" "How'd he get in this?" "You're crazy!"*]

CARTER [*bawling*]. Get back to business! We're running a meeting here!

FRANKEL. For goodness' sake, we ain't getting nowhere!

SALVATORE. No, and you ain't never goin' to git nowhere long as you try to work big business and privilege on me! We got to keep it like Mr. Mifflin says; it's a sacred brotherhood, everything divided equal. Let's get to business and count that money.

FRANKEL. Well, for goodness' sake, let's get some system into this meeting!

RILEY. How you goin' to get any system into it before you settle what's going to be done about Frankel's twenty-four shares?

CARTER. Twenty-four? He's got twenty-six; he got two more yesterday!

MRS. SIMPSON. He's got thirty-five; he got nine more this morning!

FRANKEL [*hotly*]. You bet I got thirty-five!

ALL. What! Thirty-five shares!

FRANKEL. Well, ain't I got thirty-five men workin' out there?

SIMPSON. How in thunder we goin' to settle about him holdin' all them shares?

SALVATORE. Are we goin' to let him take all that money? Thirty-five ——

FRANKEL [*leaping up, electrified*]. How d'you expect I'm goin' to pay my men if I don't get it? Are you goin' to *let* me take them thirty-five shares' profits? No, I guess you ain't! You ain't got no say about it! The money's mine right now! I get it!

SIMPSON. I object!

RILEY [*pounding the table*]. Look at the ornery little devil! He took advantage of the poor workingmen's trustfulness, got 'em in debt to him, then went and begun buying over their shares, so they had to leave the shop because he wouldn't hire 'em to do their own work, but went and hired

cheaper men. Listen to the trouble *they* make among us!

SIMPSON. It's an undesirable element.

RILEY. He had no right to buy them workmen out in the first place.

SIMPSON. And on top of that we can't git no work turned out because the fourteen skilled men he's got in there have gone and started striking just like the unskilled and they tie up everything.

RILEY. I claim he hadn't no right to buy them shares.

FRANKEL. I didn't?

ALL [*except Shomberg*]. No, you didn't!

FRANKEL [*hotly at Riley*]. You look here. S'pose you needed money bad? Ain't you got a right to sell your share?

RILEY. Sure I have!

FRANKEL. What you talkin' about, then? Ain't I got a right to buy anything you got a right to sell?

RILEY. No, you ain't, because I object to the whole system.

FRANKEL. You do! [*Points to Shomberg.*] Look there! Ask him what *he* says. He's got four.

RILEY. I don't care who's got what! All I say is I object to the system, and this factory'll git burned up if them wop workmen stay here jest because he holds them shares!

SIMPSON. You're right about that, Riley!

SALVATORE. Why, you can't hear yourself think out in the shops when you might be havin' a quiet talk with a friend.

RILEY. When them wops gits to talkin' strike, it sounds more like a revolution to me!

SIMPSON. Why, they're all inflamed up. They know what's what, all right.

FRANKEL. What do they know?

SALVATORE. They know you're drawing down on them shares about five or six times the wages you pay 'em. What I claim is that extra money he makes ought to be divided amongst *us*.

[*Emphatic approval from Carter, Simpson, and Riley. "Yes sir! You bet! That's what!"*]

FRANKEL. Just try it once!

SIMPSON. Them men ain't workin' for you, they're workin' for us. Ain't we the original owners?

FRANKEL. Y-a-a-a-h!

RILEY [*pounding the table*]. That's the stuff! We're the original owners! Any money made on them wops' wages is ours. We'll tend to business with them!

[*The noise outside has increased deafeningly; there is a loud hammering on the door, which is now flung open, and Polenski in patched overalls, a wrench in his hand, enters fiercely, slamming the door behind him. He begins an oration at the door.*]

POLENSKI. Don't we git a *hearing?* We got to take direct action in this rotten factory before we even get a word in. [*Shouts from the committee: "Get out of here, you wop!" "You ain't got no business here!" "This is a committee meeting!"*] Committee meeting, my nose! [*Shakes his fist at Frankel.*] Do you know what you're up against? You're up against the arm of labor! You monkey with labor a little more the way you have, and you'll be glad if it's only a little nitroglycerin that gits you. Hired us for two and a half, did you?

FRANKEL. My goodness, I rose you to three this morning!

POLENSKI. Yes; rose us to three! What do we care you rose us to four, to five, to six. Look what the rest you loafers here at this table is gittin'!

SALVATORE. Here, don't you bring us in this!

POLENSKI [*half screaming*]. I won't? Every one of you is in his class. [*Points at Frankel.*] You sit up here and call yourself a committee, dividin' up the money and runnin' this factory that belongs just as much to us men he hired as it does to you! It belongs to us *more* — because we're the real workin' men! [*Beats his chest.*] My God! Don't the toilers' wrongs *never* git avenged? Are we *always* goin' to be wage slaves? We demand simple justice. We been workin' here two dollars and a half a day; now we want the

wage scale abolished and double profits for each of us for every day we worked here before we found out what was goin' on, with you sittin' up here like kings in your robes, tellin' the poor man he should have only two dollars and a half a day — sittin' up here in your pomp with your feet on the neck of labor! [*To Carter.*] *You*, in your fine broadcloth, ridin' up and down the avenues in limousines with never a thought for the toiler! Don't think for a minute we deal with this little vampire here. You're all in the same boat, and the toiling masses will hold every single one of you just as responsible as it does him, you — you capitalists!

[*Instantly upon this the door is opened enough to admit the heads of two workmen very similar to Polenski.*]

FIRST WORKMAN. Parasites!

SECOND WORKMAN. Bloodsuckers!

POLENSKI. Capitalists, parasites, bloodsuckers, bourgeoisie! Do you think we expect any justice out of *you?* Do you think I come in this room ever dreaming you'd grant our demands? No! We knew you! And if we do assert our rights, what do you do? You set your hellhounds of police on us! Haven't we been agitatin' for our rights among you for days? We've got our answer from you, but you look out for ours, because as sure as there is a hell waitin' for all parasites, we'll send you there, and your factory, too! [*Looks up at the clock.*] My God, is that clock right? [*He runs out at top speed.*]

SIMPSON. They don't seem to know their place!

SHOMBERG. Them fellers think they own the earth.

RILEY. Next, they'll be thinkin' they own our factory!

CARTER [*solemnly*]. Well, sir, I wonder what this country is coming to!

[*Here there is a muffled explosion in the sample piano, which rocks with the jar, at the same time emitting a few curls of smoke. General exclamations of*

horror and fright as all of the committee break for shelter.]

SHOMBERG [*his voice rising over the others*]. Send for the police!

SALVATORE [*shouting*]. Wait! We ain't divided up the money!

NORA. It's over; it hasn't done any harm!

FRANKEL [*on his hands and knees under the table*]. It was in that piano. [*Nora goes across to the piano.*] Look out, he's probably got another one in there.

[*Mifflin helps Nora to take off the front of the piano, which is still mildly smoking; a wreckage of wires is seen.*]

MIFFLIN [*smiling*]. It must have been an accident!

FRANKEL AND MRS. SIMPSON [*coming out from under the table*]. Accident!

MIFFLIN. Of course it's unfortunate, because it might be misconstrued.

RILEY. Yes, it might.

MIFFLIN [*confidently*]. Let me go talk to these new comrades!

RILEY. Comrades? Frankel's wops? Ha, ha!

SALVATORE. Aw, them ain't comrades; them's just Frankel's hired workers.

MIFFLIN. They are comrades in the best sense of the word. I am in touch with all the groups. A moment's reasoning from one they know to be sympathetic ——

[*He goes out into the factory.*]

SALVATORE. Hey, let's get that stuff divided up. I got an engagement.

FRANKEL. Yes; let's hurry. You can't tell *what* they got planted round here.

CARTER [*rapping*]. The meeting will please come to ——

SALVATORE. Here, cut that out! We ain't got no time to ——

SHOMBERG. No. Come to business; come to business!

NORA. The only way, comrades, to know how much we have

gained since the last division is to read the bookkeeper's report.

FRANKEL. Well, for heaven's sakes, go on — read it!

CARTER. Well, I did want to a long while ago, when we first set down and begun the meeting. I says then, I report on my committee and ——

VARIOUS MEMBERS. Oh, for heaven's sake! Go ahead! Cut it out!

CARTER [*picking up the sheets*]. On the first page it says Soomary.

RILEY. What's that mean?

MRS. SIMPSON. Oh, my goodness!

FRANKEL. Git to the figures!

CARTER. Well, here, on one side it says gross receipts ——

SHOMBERG [*rubbing his hands*]. Ah!

CARTER. What?

SIMPSON [*shouting*]. Read it!

CARTER. Gross receipts $2,162.43. On the other side it says: "Cash paid out $19,461.53." [*All are puzzled.*] It didn't sound right to me, even the first time I read it. Looks like he's got the wrong words, crossed over.

FRANKEL. Why, gross receipts last month was over twenty-four thousand dollars!

SHOMBERG. Yes, and that was a fall off from the month before.

CARTER [*rubbing his head*]. Well, I don't pretend to understand it, but he told me all them was mostly payments on old sales anyhow.

RILEY. Read it again, read it again!

SIMPSON. Yes, let's see if we can't get what the sense of it is.

CARTER. It says "Gross receipts, $2,162.43" — that's over here. "Cash paid out, $19,461.53." [*All seem dazed.*]

RILEY. What else you got there?

CARTER. As near as it seems to me, just a lot of items.

SALVATORE. Well, we must have a lot of money in the bank; what's the matter we draw that out and divide it?

RILEY. Wait a minute! What's there besides them items?

CARTER. He's got a note. "Note," he says; here it is: He says: "Bank notified us this morning we're overdrawn $59.01."

RILEY. Overdrawn?

SHOMBERG. Then we got to deposit some to our account. Who's got charge of the checks that comes in?

NORA. The bookkeeper has charge, but there aren't any checks.

CARTER. No, they ain't been any checks comin' in for some days; a week or so, or two weeks, you might say. We've looked everywhere for 'em ——

FRANKEL [*aghast*]. You looked all through them letters?

CARTER. They ain't none left in 'em that wasn't took out a good while ago.

SALVATORE. You ain't looked through the safe, have you?

CARTER. They ain't a one in it; it's got me all puzzled up, I tell you. I was jest waitin' for the meeting to settle it.

FRANKEL. But heaven's sakes! There must be checks comin' in from new sales!

CARTER. It says here sales has fallen off. So fur this month, they was only three instruments sold.

SIMPSON. But, my gosh, this is the *end* of the month!

CARTER. They was two sold in Council Bluffs and one in Detroit. [*General agitation and excitement.*]

MRS. SIMPSON [*trembling with rage and fear*]. You mean to stand there and tell me we ain't goin' to git any money to-day, and my flat-rent to pay to-morrow?

RILEY. Don't talk about your flat-rent to me, lady! There's others of us got a few things to pay.

SHOMBERG. But, my golly, when *do* we git paid?

CARTER. I can't make out from what he's got here.

SALVATORE [*rapping fiercely on the table*]. Hey! I got to have my money!

CARTER. Well, I got to have mine, don't I?

SIMPSON. Go on. See what else it says.

CARTER. Well, here he's got this. Here it says: "Bills payable, $17,162.48."

FRANKEL [*leaping up*]. Bills payable! My God, no money in bank, and we're $17,162.48 in debt!

MRS. SIMPSON [*shrieking*]. Who owes it?

SIMPSON. We do!

SHOMBERG. Who's goin' to pay it?

RILEY. Who run us into debt that way?

SALVATORE. That's the man we're after!

FRANKEL. Who's the man responsible for us bein' $17,162.48 bankrupt?

RILEY [*hammering the table*]. Who run us into debt over seventeen thousand dollars?

SIMPSON. Well, give him a chance to answer.

CARTER. What do *I* know about it? That's what the report says. That's all *I* know.

SHOMBERG. Well, somebody's got us into debt. And who is it?

NORA. It's all of us! Haven't we all done this thing together?

FRANKEL. Well, who's got to pay it?

NORA. We've all got to!

SHOMBERG, SALVATORE, FRANKEL, AND MRS. SIMPSON. You expect to git blood out of a stone? What do you take us for? You're crazy! You helped get us into this!

[*Shomberg and Salvatore begin shouting at each other.*]

SHOMBERG. You pay me back that twenty-five dollars you got from me Friday!

SALVATORE. How I'm goin' to pay you twenty-five dollars when I'm seventeen thousand dollars in debt?

SHOMBERG. I'll have that money!

[*He takes a paper weight from desk.*]

SALVATORE. You throw that at me, I'll give you a little sticker where you won't like it!

[*Puts his hand in the breast of his coat. Murder appears imminent. Sudden and general dispersal*

from the neighborhood of the combatants, which brings Nora to Gibson, unconsciously seeking his protection.]

SHOMBERG. Aw, I didn't mean anything serious like that. [*Puts down the paper weight.*] But I'll get the money.

SALVATORE. You'll *need* it — to pay your share what we owe!

MRS. SIMPSON. I'd like to see 'em get one cent out of me!

CARTER. It ain't just us here of course; they's a hundred and seventy men outside the debt belongs to as well as us. The whole factory's got to pay it.

SIMPSON. Great gosh! Do you think we can go out there, when they're expectin' a month's pay, and tell 'em they're gettin' only a seventeen-thousand-dollar *debt?*

FRANKEL. And me, me, me! Look at *me!* Do you think I can go out and tell them thirty-five bloodhounds I ain't got no money to even pay their wages?

RILEY [*vehemently*]. What's more, you owe thirty-five shares of that debt, Frankel!

ALL [*with vindictive satisfaction*]. That's it! Sure he does! He owes thirty-five shares of the debt! That's right!

FRANKEL. What?

RILEY. You owe thirty-five shares of the seventeen-thousand debt.

FRANKEL. My heavens! Ain't the meetin' just settled it I didn't have no right to them shares and it was all to be divided even?

CARTER. What we got to do, we got to go out there and tell 'em they owe this money.

FRANKEL. I can't tell mine!

SALVATORE. I know one game little fellow that ain't goin' to pay nobody nothin'. Excuse me, gents; they'll have to find me!

[*He goes out hastily by the door that leads to the street.*]

CARTER. Well, *somebody's* got to go out there and tell 'em.

SIMPSON. Well, I won't!

MRS. SIMPSON. It's the chairman's place.

CARTER. We all got to go!

FRANKEL. Not me!

SIMPSON. Yes, you will! [*Takes him by the shoulders.*]

RILEY [*taking him from Simpson*]. Put him first!

[*They begin to jostle toward the factory door.*]

FRANKEL [*as they push him, he waves a despairing hand at Gibson*]. Mr. Gibson, that was a fine trick you played on us!

THE COMMITTEE [*shouting*]. You go on there! Come on! We got to take our medicine!

FRANKEL. Lemme alone! Take your hands off me!

[*They jostle out, leaving Nora and Gibson alone together. Nora has gone to the large table, sitting beside it, with her head far down between her hands. As the noise dies away, Mifflin comes in from the factory.*]

MIFFLIN. What wonderful spirits! Just great, rough boys! [*Smiles as he gets his hat, magazines, newspaper, and umbrella.*] Everything is working out. Some little inevitable friction here, some little setback there. But it all works, it all works to the one great end. I'm sorry I wasn't present for the end of the meeting to hear what success there was this month, but that's a detail. The dream has come true. It's here, and we're living it! [*At the door.*] I'll send you a copy of my next article, Mr. Gibson. [*Modestly laughs.*] They tell me the series is making a little sensation in its way. Good morning!

[*He goes out jauntily. Gibson has never moved from his chair; he turns his head, still not rising, and looks fixedly at Nora. She slowly lifts her head, meets his eye; her head sinks again. He rises and slowly walks over to her, looking down at her. Then, bending still lower, she begins to cry.*]

GIBSON. Well, Nora, what was the matter with it?

NORA [*not looking up*]. I don't know. What was?

GIBSON. You needed a manager to do what I had been doing.

NORA. Couldn't we have learned? Couldn't one of us?

GIBSON. One of you did — Hill.

NORA. But he left!

GIBSON. Why did Hill leave?

NORA. Other people offered him more money.

GIBSON. Yes; he was the one man that all the rest of you depended on. He was worth more.

NORA. But were you worth all that you took? You took all that the business made.

GIBSON. Yes; and last year it was fifty thousand.

NORA. Were you actually worth that much to it?

GIBSON. Other men in the business think so. [*Shows her a letter.*] Here's an offer from the Coles-Hibbard people, out in Cleveland, of that much salary to do for them what I did here.

NORA. It isn't right; you pay labor only what you have to pay.

GIBSON. The Coles-Hibbard people offer to pay me what they'd have to, and they're pretty hard-headed men. The whole world pays only what it has to.

NORA. It isn't right! It isn't right!

GIBSON. Last winter I saw you in a three-dollar seat listening to Caruso. Have you ever given that much to the organ-grinder who comes under these windows?

NORA. Will it always be so?

GIBSON. I don't know. But it's so now.

NORA. But will the plan *always* fail?

GIBSON. I think it will until human beings are as near alike as the ants and bees are. Your system is in full effect with them, but we — we strive; even in this fellowship here of yours the striving began to show.

NORA [*looking up at him appealingly*]. But are these inequalities *right?*

GIBSON [*gently, rather sadly*]. I don't know. I only know what is.

NORA. Well — I'm whipped. [*Smiles ruefully, away from him; then she turns again to him.*] Are you going to accept that offer?

GIBSON. What do you say?

[*Her head droops again. Angry voices are heard, growing louder as they approach. The door is thrown open, and the members of the committee, noisily talking, appear in the doorway.*]

FRANKEL. It was a bum deal all through!

SHOMBERG. Shovin' his run-down factory off onto us!

RILEY [*fiercely*]. You never give us no deed to this plant, Mr. Gibson!

SIMPSON. They ain't a court in the land'll hold us to it!

CARTER. No, sir; and we've voted this is your factory, Mr. Gibson! We ain't responsible!

GIBSON. It is my factory and I'm going to run it! Any man of you not back at work in ten minutes on the old scale of wages will be fired!

[*The members whoop with joy. Frankel and Carter both try to shake hands with Gibson at once.*]

CARTER. Well, that's a relief to *me*. Thank you, Mr. Gibson!

FRANKEL. That takes a heap off my mind!

RILEY. God bless you, sir!

GIBSON. Never mind that! You go back to work.

[*Whooping, the committee, in great spirits and with the greatest friendliness to one another, depart rapidly. Closing the door, Gibson turns briskly to Nora, and speaks in a businesslike way.*]

GIBSON. Nora, will you marry me?

NORA [*meekly*]. Yes — I will.

GIBSON. Will you marry me to-day?

NORA [*with a little more spirit*]. Yes, I will!

GIBSON. Will you go with me and marry me right now?

NORA [*more loudly and promptly*]. Yes, I will!

GIBSON. Well, then ——

[*He gets his hat and coat, then thinks of something he*

wants from his desk, and goes over to get it. Meantime, Nora, not moving so rapidly as Gibson, but more thoughtfully, goes up to the wall where hang her jacket and hat, takes off her apron, puts on the jacket and hat and goes to the door that leads to the street, where she stands waiting. There is a knock on the factory door, which opens without waiting, and Simpson comes in.]

SIMPSON. I don't want to detain you if you're goin' out, Mr. Gibson, but there's something's got to be settled. And the men in my department say it's got to be settled right now. That wage scale says we get time and a half for overtime, and the men in the finishing department, they ain't gettin' no time and a half on piecework and we never understood that agreement you claim we signed with you anyhow. So what we says, if we don't get double time instead of time and a half for overtime — why, Mr. Gibson, it looks like them men couldn't hardly be held back. Now what we demand is ——

[*He is still talking as the final curtain descends upon these three: Gibson seated at his desk, looking fixedly at Simpson, Nora waiting thoughtfully by the door that leads to the street.*]

CURTAIN

THE DRAGON[1]

By LADY GREGORY

CHARACTERS

The King.
The Queen.
The Princess Nuala.
The Dall Glic (*The Blind Wise Man*).
The Nurse.
The Prince of the Marshes.
Manus, King of Sorcha.
Fintan, The Astrologer.
Taig.
Sibby (*Taig's Mother*).
Gatekeeper.
Two Aunts of the Prince of the Marshes.
Foreign Men Bringing in Food.
The Dragon.

ACT I

Scene: *A room in the King's house at Burren. Large window at back with deep window-seat. Doors right and left. A small table and some chairs.*

DALL GLIC [*coming in with tray, which he puts on table; goes back to door*]. You can come in, King. There is no one here.

KING [*coming in*]. That's very good. I was in dread the Queen might be in it.

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DALL GLIC. It is a good thought I had bringing it in here, and she gone to give learning to the Princess. She is not likely to come this side. It would be a great pity to annoy her.

KING [*hastily swallowing a mouthful*]. Look out now the door and keep a good watch. The time she will draw upon me is when I am eating my little bite.

DALL GLIC. I'll do that. What I wouldn't see with my one eye, there's no other would see with three.

KING. A month to-day since I wed with her, and well pleased I am to be back in my own place. I give you word my teeth are rusting with the want of meat. On the journey I got no fair play. She wouldn't be willing to see me nourish myself, unless maybe with the marrow bone of a wren.

DALL GLIC. Sure she lays down she is but thinking of the good of your health.

KING. Maybe so. She is apt to be paying too much attention to what will be for mine and for the world's good. I kept my health fair enough, and the first wife not begrudging me my enough. I don't know what in the world led me not to stop as I was.

DALL GLIC. It is what you were saying, it was for the good of the Princess Nuala, and of yourself.

KING. That is what herself laid down. It would be a great ease to my mind, she was saying, to have in the house with the young girl, a far-off cousin of the King of Alban, and that had been conversation woman in his Court.

DALL GLIC. So it might be too. She is a great manager of people.

KING. She is that . . . I think I hear her coming. . . . Throw a cloth over the plates.

QUEEN [*coming in*]. I was in search of you.

KING. I thought you were in Nuala's sunny parlor, learning her to play music and to go through books.

QUEEN. That is what I thought to do. But I hadn't hardly

started to teach her the principles of conversation and the branches of relationships and kindred of the big people of the earth, when she plucked off the coverings I had put over the cages, and set open their doors, till the fiery birds of Sabes and the canaries of the eastern world were screeching around my head, giving out every class of cry and call.

KING. So they would too.

QUEEN. The royal eagles stirred up till I must quit the place with their squawking, and the enchanted swans raising up their heads and pecking at the beadwork on my gown.

KING. Ah, she has a wish for the birds of the air, that are by nature light and airy the same as herself.

QUEEN. It is time for her to turn her mind to good sense. What's that? [*Whipping cloth from tray.*] Is it that you are eating again, and it is but one half-hour since your breakfast?

KING. Ah, that wasn't a breakfast you'd call a breakfast.

QUEEN. Very healthy food, oaten meal flummery with whey, and a griddle cake; dandelion tea and sorrel from the field.

KING. My old fathers ate their enough of wild herbs and the like in the early time of the world. I'm thinking that it is in my nature to require a good share of nourishment as if to make up for the hardships they went through.

QUEEN. What now have you within that pastry wall?

KING. It is but a little leveret pie.

QUEEN [*poking with fork*]. Leveret! What's this in it? The thickness of a blanket of beef; calves' sweetbreads; cocks' combs; balls mixed with livers and with spice. You to so much as taste of it, you'll be crippled and crappled with the gout, and roaring out in your pain.

KING. I tell you my generations have enough done of fasting and for making little of the juicy meats of the world.

QUEEN. And the waste of it! Goose eggs and jellies. . . . That much would furnish out a dinner for the whole of the King of Alban's Court.

KING. Ah, I wouldn't wish to be using anything at all,

only for to gather strength for to steer the business of the whole of the kingdom!

QUEEN. Have you enough ate now, my dear? Are you satisfied?

KING. I am not. I would wish for a little taste of that saffron cake having in it raisins of the sun.

QUEEN. Saffron! Are you raving? You to have within you any of the four-and-twenty sicknesses of the race, it would throw it out in red blisters on your skin.

KING. Let me just taste one little slab of that venison ham.

QUEEN [*poking with a fork*]. It would take seven chewings! Sudden death it would be! Leave it alone now and rise up. To keep in health every man should quit the table before he is satisfied — there are some would walk to the door and back with every bite.

KING. Is it that I am to eat my meal standing, the same as a crane in a shallow, or moving from tuft to thistle like you'd see a jennet on the high road?

QUEEN. Well, at the least, let you drink down a share of this tansy juice. I was telling you it would be answerable to your health.

KING. You are doing entirely too much for me.

QUEEN. Sure I am here to be comfortable to you. This house before I came into it was but a ship without a rudder! Here now, take the spoon in your hand.

DALL GLIC. Leave it there, Queen, and I'll engage he'll swallow it down bye-and-bye.

QUEEN. Is it that *you* are meddling, Dall Glic? It is time some person took you in hand. I wonder now could that dark eye of yours be cured?

DALL GLIC. It is given in that it cannot, by doctors and by druids.

QUEEN. That is a pity now; it gives you a sort of a one-sided look. It might not be so hard a thing to put out the sight of the other.

DALL GLIC. I'd sooner leave them the way they are.

QUEEN. I'll put a knot on my handkerchief till such time as I can give my mind to it. . . . Now, my dear [*To King.*], make no more delay. It is right to drink it down after your meal. The stomach to be bare empty, the medicine might prey upon the body till it would be wore away and consumed.

KING. Time enough. Let it settle now for a minute.

QUEEN. Here, now, I'll hold your nose the way you will not get the taste of it.

[*She holds spoon to his mouth. A ball flies in at window; he starts and medicine is spilled.*]

PRINCESS [*coming in with Nurse*]. Is it true what they are telling me?

QUEEN. Do you see that you near hit the King with your ball, and, what is worse again, you have his medicine spilled from the spoon.

PRINCESS [*patting him*]. Poor old King.

QUEEN. Have you your lessons learned?

PRINCESS [*throwing books in the air*]. Neither line nor letter of them! Poem book! Brehon Laws! I have done with books! I am seventeen years old to-day!

QUEEN. There is no one would think it and you so flighty as you are.

PRINCESS [*to King*]. Is it true that the cook is gone away?

KING [*aghast*]. What's that you're saying?

QUEEN. Don't be annoying the King's mind with such things. He should be hidden from every trouble and care.

PRINCESS. Was it you sent him away?

QUEEN. Not at all. If he went, it was through foolishness and pride.

PRINCESS. It is said in the house that you annoyed him.

QUEEN. I never annoyed any person in my life, unless it might be for their own good. But it fails some to recognize their best friend. Just teaching him I was to pickle onion-thinnings as it was done at the King of Alban's Court.

PRINCESS. Didn't he know that before?

QUEEN. Whether or no, he gave me very little thanks, but turned around and asked his wages. Hurrying him and harrying him he said I was, and away with him, himself and his four-and-twenty apprentices.

KING. That is bad news, and pitiful news.

QUEEN. Do not be troubling yourself at all. It will be easy to find another.

KING. It might not be easy to find so good a one. A great pity! A dinner or a supper not to be rightly dressed is apt to give no pleasure in the eating or in the bye-and-bye.

QUEEN. I have taken it in hand. I have a good headpiece! I put out a call with running lads, and with the army captains through the whole of the five provinces; and along with that, I have it put up on tablets at the post-office.

PRINCESS. I am sorry the old one to be gone. To remember him is nearly the farthest spot in my memory.

QUEEN [*sharply*]. If you want the house to be under your hand only, it is best for you to settle into one of your own.

PRINCESS. Give me the little rush cabin by the stream and I'll be content.

QUEEN. If you mind yourself and profit by my instruction, it is maybe not a cabin you will be moving to but a palace.

PRINCESS. I'm tired of palaces. There are too many people in them.

QUEEN. That is talking folly. When you settle yourself, it must be in the station where you were born.

PRINCESS. I have no mind to settle myself yet awhile.

NURSE. Ah, you will not be saying that the time Mr. Right will come down the chimney, and will give you the marks and tokens of a king.

QUEEN. There might have some come looking for her before this, if it was not for you petting and pampering her the way you do, and encouraging her flightiness and follies. It is likely she will get no offers till such time as I will have taught her the manners and the right customs of courts.

NURSE. Sure I am acquainted with courts myself. Wasn't it I fostered comely Manus that is presently King of Sorcha, since his father went out of the world? And as to lovers coming to look for her! They do be coming up to this as plenty as the eye could hold them, and she refusing them, and they laying the blame upon the King!

KING. That is so, they laying the blame upon myself. There was the uncle of the King of Leinster; he never sent me another car-load of asparagus from the time you banished him away.

PRINCESS. He was a widower man.

KING. As to the heir of Orkney, since the time you sent him to the right about, I never got so much as a conger eel from his hand.

PRINCESS. As dull as a fish he was. He had a fish's eyes.

KING. That wasn't so with the champion of the merings of Ulster.

PRINCESS. A freckled man. He had hair the color of a fox.

KING. I wish he didn't stop sending me his tribute of heather beer.

QUEEN. It is a poor daughter that will not wish to be helpful to her father.

PRINCESS. If I am to wed for the furnishing of my father's table, it's as good for you to wrap me in a speckled fawnskin and roast me! [*Runs out, tossing her ball.*]

QUEEN. She is no way fit for marriage unless with a herd to the birds of the air, till she has a couple of years schooling.

KING. It would be hard to put her back to that.

QUEEN. I must take it in hand. She is getting entirely too much of her own way.

NURSE. Leave her alone, and in the end it will be a good way.

QUEEN. To keep rules and hours she must learn, and to give in to order and good sense. [*To King.*] There is a pigeon messenger I brought from Alban I am about to let loose on this day with news of myself and of yourself. I will send with it a message to a friend I have, bidding her

to make ready for Nuala a place in her garden of learning and her school.

KING. That is going too fast. There is no hurry.

QUEEN. She is seventeen years. There is no day to be lost. I will go write the letter.

NURSE. Oh, you wouldn't send away the poor child!

DALL GLIC. It would be a great hardship to send her so far. Our poor little Princess Nu!

QUEEN [*sharply*]. What are saying? [*Dall Glic is silent.*]

KING. I would not wish her to be sent out of this.

QUEEN. There is no other way to set her mind to sense and learning. It will be for her own good.

NURSE. Where's the use troubling her with lessons and with books that maybe she will never be in need of at all? Speak up for her, King.

KING. Let her stop for this year as she is.

QUEEN. You are all too soft and too easy. She will turn on you and will blame you for it, and another year or two years slipped by.

NURSE. That she may!

DALL GLIC. Who knows what might take place within the twelvemonth that is coming?

KING. Ah, don't be talking about it. Maybe it never might come to pass.

DALL GLIC. It will come to pass, if there is truth in the clouds of sky.

KING. It will not be for a year, anyway. There'll be many an ebbing and flowing of the tide within a year.

QUEEN. What at all are you talking about?

KING. Ah, where's the use of talking too much?

QUEEN. Making riddles you are, and striving to keep the meaning from your comrade, that is myself.

KING. It's best not be thinking about the thing you would not wish, and maybe it might never come around at all. To strive to forget a threat yourself, it might maybe be forgotten by the universe.

QUEEN. Is it true something was threatened?

KING. How would I know is anything true, and the world so full of lies as it is?

NURSE. That is so. He might have been wrong in his foretelling. What is he in the finish but an old prophecy?

DALL GLIC. Is it of Fintan you are saying that?

QUEEN. And who, will you tell me, is Fintan?

DALL GLIC. Any one that never heard tell of Fintan never heard anything at all.

QUEEN. His name was not up on the tablets of big men at the King of Alban's Court, or of Britain.

NURSE. Ah, sure in those countries they are without religion or belief.

QUEEN. Is it that there was a prophecy?

KING. Don't mind it. What are prophecies? Don't we hear them every day of the week? And if one comes true, there may be seven blind and come to nothing.

QUEEN [*to Dall Glic*]. I must get to the root of this, and the handle. Who, now, is Fintan?

DALL GLIC. He is an astrologer, and understanding the nature of the stars.

NURSE. He wore out in his lifetime three eagles and three palm trees and three earthen dykes. It is down in a cleft of the rocks beyond he has his dwelling presently, the way he can be watching the stars through the daytime.

DALL GLIC. He prophesied in a prophecy, and it is written in clean letters in the King's yewtree box.

KING. It is best to keep it out of sight. It being to be, it will be; and, if not, where's the use troubling our mind?

QUEEN. Sound it out to me.

DALL GLIC [*looking from window and drawing curtain*]. There is no story in the world is worse to me or more pitiful; I wouldn't wish any person to hear.

NURSE. Oh, take care it would come to the ears of my darling Nu!

DALL GLIC. It is said by himself and the heavens that in a

year from this day the King's daughter will be brought away and devoured by a scaly Green Dragon that will come from the North of the World.

QUEEN. A Dragon! I thought you were talking of some danger. I wouldn't give in to dragons. I never saw one. I'm not in dread of beasts unless it might be a mouse in the night-time!

KING. Put it out of mind. It is likely anyway that the world will soon be ended the way it is.

QUEEN. I will send and search out this astrologer and will question him.

DALL GLIC. You have not far to search. He is outside at the kitchen door at this minute, and as if questioning after something, and it a half-score and seven years since I knew him to come out of his cave.

KING. Do not! He might waken up the Dragon and put him in mind of the girl, for to make his own foretelling come true.

NURSE. Ah, such a thing cannot be! The poor innocent child! [*Weeps.*]

QUEEN. Where's the use of crying and roaring? The thing must be stopped and put an end to. I don't say I give in to your story, but that would be an unnatural death. I would be scandalized being stepmother to a girl that would be swallowed by a sea-serpent!

NURSE. Ochone! Don't be talking of it at all!

QUEEN. At the King of Alban's Court, one of the royal family to die over, it will be naturally on a pillow, and the dead-bells ringing, and a burying with white candles, and crape on the knocker of the door, and a flagstone put over the grave. What way could we put a stone or so much as a rose-bush over Nuala and she in the inside of a water-worm might be ploughing its way down to the north of the world?

NURSE. Och! that is what is killing me entirely! O save her, save her!

KING. I tell you, it being to be, it will be.

QUEEN. You may be right, so, when you would not go to the expense of paying her charges at the Royal school. But wait, now, there is a plan coming into my mind.

NURSE. There must surely be some way!

QUEEN. It is likely a king's daughter the beast — if there is a beast — will come questing after, and not after a king's wife.

DALL GLIC. That is according to custom.

QUEEN. That's what I am saying. What we have to do is to join Nuala with a man of a husband, and she will be safe from the danger ahead of her. In all the inventions made by poets, for to put terror on children or to knock laughter out of fools, did any of you ever hear of a Dragon swallowing the wedding-ring?

ALL. We never did.

QUEEN. It's easy enough so. There must be no delay till Nuala will be married and wed with some one that will bring her away out of this, and let the Dragon go hungry home!

NURSE. That she may! Isn't it a pity now she being so hard to please!

QUEEN. Young people are apt to be selfish and to have no thought but for themselves. She must not be hard to please when it will be to save and to serve her family and to keep up respect for their name. Here she is coming.

NURSE. Ah, you would not tell her! You would not put the dear child under the shadow of such a terror and such a threat!

KING. She must not be told. I never could bear up against it.

[*Nuala comes in.*]

QUEEN. Look now at your father the way he is.

PRINCESS [*touching his hand*]. What is fretting you?

QUEEN. His heart as weighty as that the chair near broke under him.

PRINCESS. I never saw you this way before.

QUEEN. And all on the head of yourself!

PRINCESS. I am sorry, and very sorry, for that.

QUEEN. He is loth to say it to you, but he is tired and wore out waiting for you to settle with some match. See what a troubled look he has on his face.

PRINCESS [*to King*]. Is it that you want me to leave you? [*He gives a sob.*] [*To Dall Glic.*] Is it the Queen urged him to this?

DALL GLIC. If she did, it was surely for your good.

NURSE. Oh, my child and my darling, let you strive to take a liking to some good man that will come!

PRINCESS. Are you going against me with the rest?

NURSE. You know well I would never do that!

PRINCESS. Do you, father, urge me to go?

KING. They are in too big a hurry. Why wouldn't they wait a while, for a quarter, or three-quarters of a year?

PRINCESS. Is that all the delay I am given, and the term is set for me, like a servant that would be banished from the house?

KING. That's not it. That's not right. I would never give in to let you go . . . if it wasn't . . .

PRINCESS. I know. [*Stands up.*] For my own good!

[*Trumpet outside.*]

GATEKEEPER [*coming in*]. There is company at the door.

QUEEN. Who is it?

GATEKEEPER. Servants, and a company of women, and one that would seem to be a Prince, and young.

PRINCESS. Then he is come asking me in marriage.

DALL GLIC. Who is he at all?

GATEKEEPER. They were saying he is the son of the King of the Marshes.

KING. Go bring him in. [*Gatekeeper goes.*]

DALL GLIC. That's right! He has great riches and treasure. There are some say he is the first match in Ireland.

NURSE. He is not. If his father has a copper crown, and our

own King a silver one, it is the King of Sorcha has a crown of gold! The young King of Sorcha that is the first match.

DALL GLIC. If he is, this one is apt to be the second first.

QUEEN. Do you hear, Nuala, what luck is flowing to you?

DALL GLIC. Do not now be turning your back on him as you did to so many.

PRINCESS. No; whoever he is, it is likely I will not turn away from this one.

QUEEN. Go now and ready yourself to meet him.

PRINCESS. Am I not nice enough the way I am?

QUEEN. You are not. The King of Alban's daughter has hair as smooth as if a cow had licked it. [*Princess goes.*]

GATEKEEPER. Here is the Prince of the Marshes!

[*Enter Prince, very young and timid, an old lady on each side slightly in advance of him.*]

KING. A great welcome before you. . . . And who may these be?

PRINCE. Seven aunts I have . . .

FIRST AUNT [*interrupting*]. If he has, there are but two of us have come along with him.

SECOND AUNT. For to care him and be company for him on his journey, it being the first time he ever quitted home.

QUEEN. This is a great honor. Will you take a chair?

FIRST AUNT. Leave that for the Prince of the Marshes. It is away from the draught of the window.

SECOND AUNT. We ourselves are in charge of his health. I have here his eel-skin boots for the days that will be wet under foot.

FIRST AUNT. And I have here my little bag of cures, with a cure in it that would rise the body out of the grave as whole and as sound as the time you were born.

[*Lays it down.*]

KING [*to Prince*]. It is many a day your father and myself were together in our early time. What way is he? He was farther out in age than myself.

PRINCE. He is . . .

FIRST AUNT [*interrupting*]. He is only middling these last years. The doctors have taken him in hand.

KING. He was more for fowling, and I was more for horses — before I increased so much in girth. Is it for horses you are, Prince?

PRINCE. I didn't go up on one up to this.

FIRST AUNT. Kings and princes are getting scarce. They are the most class is wearing away, and it is right for them keep in mind their safety.

SECOND AUNT. The Prince has no need to go upon a horse, where he has always a coach at his command.

KING. It is fowling that suits you so?

PRINCE. I would be well pleased . . .

FIRST AUNT. There is great danger going out fowling with a gun that might turn on you after and take your life.

SECOND AUNT. Why would the Prince go into danger, having servants that will go following after birds?

QUEEN. He is likely waiting till his enemies will make an attack upon the country to defend it.

FIRST AUNT. There is a good dyke around about the marshes, and a sort of quaking bog. It is not likely war will come till such time as it will be made by the birds of the air.

KING. Well, we must strive to knock out some sport or some pleasure.

PRINCE. It was not on pleasure I was sent.

FIRST AUNT. That's so, but on business.

SECOND AUNT. Very weighty business.

KING. Let the lad tell it out himself.

PRINCE. I hope there is no harm in me coming hither. I would be loth to push on you . . .

FIRST AUNT. We thought it was right, as he was come to sensible years . . .

KING. Stop a minute, ma'am, give him his time.

PRINCE. My father . . . and his counselors . . . and my seven aunts . . . that said it would be right for me to join with a wife.

QUEEN. They showed good sense in that.

PRINCE [*rapidly*]. They bade me come and take a look at your young lady of a Princess to see would she be likely to be pleasing to them.

FIRST AUNT. That's it, and that is what brought ourselves along with him — to see would we be satisfied.

KING. I don't know. The girl is young — she's young.

FIRST AUNT. It is what we were saying, that might be no drawback. It might be easier train her in our own ways, and to do everything that is right.

KING. Sure we are all wishful to do the thing that is right, but it's sometimes hard to know.

SECOND AUNT. Not in our place. What the King of the Marshes would not know, his counselors and ourselves would know.

QUEEN. It will be very answerable to the Princess to be under such good guidance.

FIRST AUNT. For low people and for middling people it is well enough to follow their own opinion and their will. But for the Prince's wife to have any choice or any will of her own, the people would not believe her to be a *real* princess. [*Princess comes to door, listening unseen.*]

KING. Ah, you must not be too strict with a girl that has life in her.

PRINCE. My seven aunts that were saying they have a great distrust of any person that is lively.

FIRST AUNT. We would rather than the greatest beauty in the world get him a wife who would be content to stop in her home.

[*Princess comes in very stately and with a fine dress. She curtseys. Aunts curtsey and sit down again. Prince bows uneasily and sidles away.*]

FIRST AUNT. Will you sit, now, between the two of us?

PRINCESS. It is more fitting for a young girl to stay in her standing in the presence of a king's kindred and his son, since he is come so far to look for me.

SECOND AUNT. That is a very nice thought.

PRINCESS. My far-off grandmother, the old people were telling me, never sat at the table to put a bit in her mouth till such time as her lord had risen up satisfied. She was that obedient to him that if he had bidden her, she would have laid down her hand upon red coals.

[*Prince looks bored and fidgets.*]

FIRST AUNT. Very good indeed.

PRINCESS. That was a habit with my grandmother. I would wish to follow in her ways.

KING. This is some new talk.

QUEEN. Stop; she is speaking fair and good.

PRINCESS. A little verse, made by some good wife, I used to be learning. "I always should: Be very good: At home should mind: My husband kind: Abroad obey: What people say."

FIRST AUNT [*getting up*]. To travel the world, I never thought to find such good sense before me. Do you hear that, Prince?

PRINCE. Sure I often heard yourselves shaping that sort.

SECOND AUNT. I'll engage the royal family will make no objection to this young lady taking charge of your house.

PRINCESS. I can do that! [*Counts on fingers.*] To send linen to the washing-tub on Monday, and dry it on Tuesday, and to mangle it Wednesday, and starch it Thursday, and iron it Friday, and fold it in the press against Sunday!

SECOND AUNT. Indeed there is little to learn you! And on Sundays, now, you will go driving in a painted coach, and your dress sewed with gold and with pearls, and the poor of the world envying you on the road.

QUEEN [*claps hands*]. There is no one but must envy her, and all that is before her for her lifetime!

FIRST AUNT. Here is the golden arm-ring the Prince brought for to slip over your hand.

SECOND AUNT. It was put on all our generations of queens at the time of the making of their match.

PRINCESS [*drawing back her hand*]. Mine is not made yet.

FIRST AUNT. Didn't you hear me saying, and the Prince saying, there is nothing could be laid down against it.

PRINCESS. There is one thing against it.

QUEEN. Oh, there can be nothing worth while!

PRINCESS. A thing you would think a great drawback and all your kindred would think it.

QUEEN [*rapidly*]. There is nothing, but maybe that she is not so tall as you might think, through the length of the heels of her shoes.

SECOND AUNT. We would put up with that much.

PRINCESS [*rapidly*]. It is that there was a spell put upon me — by a water-witch that was of my kindred. At some hours of the day I am as you see me, but at other hours I am changed into a sea-filly from the Country-under-Wave. And when I smell salt on the west wind, I must race and race and race. And when I hear the call of the gulls or the sea-eagles over my head, I must leap up to meet them till I can hardly tell what is my right element, is it the high air or is it the loosened spring-tide!

QUEEN. Stop your nonsense talk. She is gone wild and raving with the great luck that is come to her!

[*Prince has stood up, and is watching her eagerly.*]

PRINCESS. I feel a wind at this very time that is blowing from the wilderness of the sea, and I am changing with it. . . . There. [*Pulls down her hair.*] Let my mane go free! I will race you, Prince, I will race you! The wind of March will not overtake me, Prince, and I running on the top of the white waves!

[*Runs out; Prince entranced, rushes to door.*]

AUNTS [*catching hold of him*]. Are you going mad wild like herself?

PRINCE. Oh, I will go after her!

FIRST AUNT [*clutching him*]. Do not! She will drag you to destruction.

PRINCE [*struggling to door*]. What matter! Let me go or she

will escape me! [*Shaking himself free.*] I will never stop till I come to her.

[*He rushes out, Second Aunt still holding on to him.*]

FIRST AUNT. What at all has come upon him? I never knew him this way before! [*She trots after him.*]

PRINCESS [*comes leaping in by window*]. They are gone running the road to Muckanish! But they won't find me!

QUEEN. You have a right to be ashamed of yourself and your play-game. It's easy for you to go joking, having neither cark nor care: that is no way to treat the second best match in Ireland!

KING. You were saying you had your mind made up to take him.

PRINCESS. It failed me to do it! Himself and his counselors and his seven aunts!

QUEEN. He will give out that you are crazed and mad.

PRINCESS. He will be thankful to his life's end to have got free of me!

KING. I don't know. It seemed to me he was better pleased with you in the finish than in the commencement. But I'm in dread his father may not be well pleased.

PRINCESS [*patting him*]. Which now of the two of you is the most to be pitied? He to have such a timid son or you to have such an unruly daughter?

QUEEN. It is likely he will make an attack on you. There was a war made by the King of Britain on the head of a terrier pup that was sent to him and that made away on the road following hares. It's best for you to make ready to put yourself at the head of your troop.

KING. It's long since I went into my battle dress. I'm in dread it would not close upon my chest.

QUEEN. Ah, it might, so soon as you would go through a few hardships in the fight.

KING. If the rest of Adam's race was of my opinion, there'd be no fighting in the world at all.

QUEEN. It is this child's stubbornness is leading you into it.

Go out, Nuala, after the Prince. Tell him you are sorry you made a fool of him.

PRINCESS. He was that before — thinking to put me sitting and sewing in a cushioned chair, listening to stories of kings making a slaughter of one another.

QUEEN. Tell him you have changed your mind, that you were but funning; that you will wed with him yet.

PRINCESS. I would sooner wed with the King of Poison! I to have to go to his kingdom, I'd sooner go earning my wages footing turf, with a skirt of heavy flannel and a dress of the gray frieze! Himself and his bogs and his frogs!

QUEEN. I tell you it is time for you to take a husband.

PRINCESS. You said that before! And I was giving in a while ago, and I felt the blood of my heart to be rising against it! And I will not give in to you again! It is my own business and I will take my own way.

QUEEN [*to King*]. This is all one with the raving of a hag against heaven!

KING. What the Queen is saying is right. Try now and come around to it.

PRINCESS. She has set you against me with her talk!

QUEEN [*to King*]. It is best for you to lay orders on her.

PRINCESS. The King is not under your orders!

QUEEN. You are striving to make him give in to your own!

KING. I will take orders from no one at all!

QUEEN. Bid her go bring back the Prince.

PRINCESS. I say that I will not!

QUEEN. She is standing up against you! Will you give in to that?

KING. I am bothered with the whole of you! I will give in to nothing at all!

QUEEN. Make her do your bidding so.

KING. Can't you do as you are told?

PRINCESS. This concerns myself.

KING. It does, and the whole of us.

PRINCESS. Do you think you can force me to wed?

KING. I do think it, and I will do it.

PRINCESS. It will fail you!

KING. It will not! I was too easy with you up to this.

PRINCESS. Will you turn me out of the house?

KING. I will give you my word, it is little but I will!

PRINCESS. Then I have no home and no father! It is to my mother you must give an account. You know well it is with the first wife you will go at the Judgment!

QUEEN. Is it that you would make threats to the King? And put insults upon myself? Now she is daring and defying you! Let you put an end to it!

KING. I will do that! [*Stands up.*] I swear by the oath my people swear by, the seven things common to us all; by sun and moon; sea and dew; wind and water; the hours of the day and night, I will give you in marriage and in wedlock to the first man that will come into the house!

PRINCESS [*shrinking as from a blow*]. It is the Queen has done this.

QUEEN. I will give you out the reason, and see will you put blame on me or praise!

NURSE. Oh, let you stop and not draw it down upon her!

QUEEN. It is right for me to tell it; it is true telling! You not to be married and wed by this day twelvemonth, there will be a terrible thing happen you . . .

NURSE. Be quiet! Don't you see Fintan himself looking in the window!

KING. Fintan! What is it bring you here on this day?

FINTAN [*a very old man in strange clothes at window*]. What brings me is to put my curse upon the whole tribe of kitchen boys that are gone and vanished out of this, without bringing me my request, that was a bit of rendered lard that would limber the swivel of my spy-glass, that is clogged with the dripping of the cave.

NURSE. And you have no bad news?

QUEEN. Nothing to say on the head of the Princess, this being, as it is, her birthday?

FINTAN. What birthday? This is not a birthday that signifies. It is the next will be the birthday will be concerned with the great story that is foretold.

QUEEN. It is right for her to know it.

KING. It is not! It is not!

PRINCESS. Whatever the story is, let me know it, and not be treated as a child that is without courage or sense.

FINTAN. It's long till I'll come out from my cleft again, and getting no peace or quiet on the ridge of the earth. It is laid down by the stars that cannot lie, that on this day twelvemonth, you yourself will be ate and devoured by a scaly Green Dragon from the North!

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *The Same. Princess and Nurse.*

NURSE. Cheer up now, my honey bird, and don't be fretting.

PRINCESS. It is not easy to quit fretting, and the terrible story you are after telling me of all that is before and all that is behind me.

NURSE. They had no right at all to go make you aware of it. The Queen has too much talk. An unlucky stepmother she is to you!

PRINCESS. It is well for me she is here. It is well I am told the truth, where the whole of you were treating me like a child without sense, so giddy I was and contrary, and petted and humored by the whole of you. What memory would there be left of me and my little life gone by, but of a headstrong, unruly child with no thought but for myself.

NURSE. No, but the best in the world you are; there is no one seeing you pass by but would love you.

PRINCESS. That is not so. I was wild and taking my own way, mocking and humbugging.

NURSE. I never will give in that there is no way to save you from that Dragon that is foretold to be your destruction. I would give the four divisions of the world, and Ireland along with them, if I could see you pelting your ball in at the window the same as an hour ago!

PRINCESS. Maybe you will, so long as it will hurt nobody.

NURSE. Ah, sure it's no wonder there to be the tracks of tears upon your face, and that great terror before you.

PRINCESS. I will wipe them away! I will not give in to danger or to dragons! No one will see a dark face on me. I am a king's daughter of Ireland; I did not come out of a herd's hut like Deirdre that went sighing and lamenting till she was put to death, the world being sick and tired of her complaints, and her finger at her eye dripping tears!

NURSE. That's right, now. You had always great courage.

PRINCESS. There is like a change within me. You never will hear a cross word from me again. I would wish to be pleasant and peaceable until such time . . .

[*Puts handkerchief to eyes and goes.*]

DALL GLIC [*coming in*]. The King is greatly put out with all he went through, and the way the passion rose in him a while ago.

NURSE. That he may be twenty times worse before he is better! Showing such fury towards the innocent child the way he did!

DALL GLIC. The Queen has brought him to the grass plot for to give him his exercise, walking his seven steps east and west.

NURSE. Hasn't she great power over him to make him do that much?

DALL GLIC. I tell you I am in dread of her myself. Some plan she has for making my two eyes equal. I vexed her some way, and she got queer and humpy, and put a lip on herself, and said she would take me in hand. I declare I never will have a minute's ease thinking of it.

NURSE. The King should have done his seven steps, for I hear her coming. [*Dall Glic goes to recess of window.*]

QUEEN [*coming in*]. Did you, Nurse, ever at any time turn and dress a dinner?

NURSE [*very stiff*]. Indeed I never did. Any house I ever was in there was a good kitchen and well attended, the Lord be praised!

QUEEN. Ah, but just to be kind and to oblige the King.

NURSE. Troth, the same King will wait long till he'll see any dish I will ready for him! I am not one that was reared between the flags and the oven in the corner of the one room! To be a nurse to King's children is my trade, and not to go stirring mashes, for hens or for humans!

QUEEN. I heard a crafty woman lay down one time there was no way to hold a man, only by food and flattery.

NURSE. Sure any mother of children walking the road could tell you that much.

QUEEN. I went maybe too far urging him not to lessen so much food the way he did. I only thought to befriend him. But now he is some way upset and nothing will rightly smooth him but to be thinking upon his next meal; and what it will be I don't know, unless the berries of the bush.

DALL GLIC [*leaning out of the window*]. Here! Hi! Come this way!

QUEEN. Who are you calling to?

DALL GLIC. It is some one with the appearance of a cook.

QUEEN. Are you saying it is a cook? That now will put the King in great humor! [*Manus appears at the window.*]

NURSE [*looking at him*]. I wouldn't hardly think he'd suit. He has a sort of innocent look. I wouldn't say him to be a country lad. I don't know is he fitted to go readying meals for a royal family, and the King so wrathful if they do not please him as he is. And as to the Princess Nu! There to be the size of a hayseed of fat overhead on her broth, she'd fall in a dead faint.

MANUS. I'll go on so.

QUEEN. No, no. Bring him in till I'll take a look at him!

MANUS [*coming inside*]. I am a lad in search of a master. [*Inside.*] I am a lad in search of a master.

QUEEN. And I myself that am wanting a cook.

MANUS. I got word of that and I going the road.

QUEEN. You would seem to be but a young lad.

MANUS. I am not very far in age to-day. But I'll be a day older to-morrow.

QUEEN. In what country were you born and reared?

MANUS. I came from over, and I am coming hither.

QUEEN. What wages now would you be asking?

MANUS. Nothing at all unless what you think I will have earned at the time I will be leaving your service.

QUEEN. That is very right and fair. I hope you will not be asking too much help. The last cook had a whole fleet of scullions that were no use but to chatter and consume.

MANUS. I am asking no help at all but the help of the ten I bring with me. [*Holds up fingers.*]

QUEEN. That will be a great saving in the house! Can I depend upon you now not to be turning to your own use the King's ale and his wine?

MANUS. If you take me to be a thief, I will go upon my road. It was no easier for me to come than to go out again.

QUEEN [*holding him*]. No, now, don't be so proud and thinking so much of yourself. If I give you trial here, I would wish you to be ready to turn your hand to this and that, and not be saying it is or is not your business.

MANUS. My business is to do as the King wishes.

QUEEN. That's right. That is the way the servants were in the palace of the King of Alban.

MANUS. That's the way I was myself in the King's house of Sorcha.

QUEEN. Are you saying it is from that place you are come? Sure that should be a great household! The King of Sorcha, they were telling me, has seven castles on land

and seven on the sea, and provision for a year and a day in every one of them.

MANUS. That might be. I never was in more than one of them at the one time.

QUEEN. Any one that has been in that place would surely be fitting here. Keep him, Nurse! Don't let him make away from us till I will go call the King! [*Goes out.*]

NURSE. Sure it was I myself that fostered the young King of Sorcha and reared him in my lap! What way is he at all? My lovely child! Give me news of him!

MANUS. I will do that . . .

NURSE. To hear of him would delight me!

MANUS. It is I that can tell you. . . .

NURSE. It is himself should be a grand king!

MANUS. Listen till you hear! . . .

NURSE. His father was good and his mother was good, and it's likely, himself will be the best of all!

MANUS. Be quiet now and hearken! . . .

NURSE. I remember well the first day I saw him in the cradle, two and a score of years back! Oh, it is glad, and very glad, I'll be to get word of him!

MANUS. He is come to sensible years. . . .

NURSE. A golden cradle it was and it standing on four golden balls, the very round of the sun!

MANUS. He is out of his cradle now. [*Shakes her shoulder.*] Let you hearken! He is in need of your help.

NURSE. He'll get it, he'll get it. I doted down on that child! The best to laugh and to roar!

MANUS [*putting hand on her mouth*]. Will you be silent, you hag of a nurse? Can't you see that I myself am Manus, the new King of Sorcha?

NURSE [*starting back*]. Do you say that? And how's every bit of you? Sure I'd know you in any place. Stand back till I'll get the full of my eyes of you! Like the father you are, and you need never be sorry to be that! Well, I said to myself and you looking in at the window, I would not

believe but there's some drops of kings' blood in that lad!

MANUS. That was not what you said to me!

NURSE. And wasn't the journey long on you from Sorcha, that is at the rising of the sun? Is it your foot-soldiers and your bullies you brought with you, or did you come with your hound and your deer-hound and with your horn?

MANUS. There was no one knew of my journey. I came bare alone. I threw a shell in the sea and made a boat of it, and took the track of the wild duck across the mountains of the waves.

NURSE. And where in the world wide did you get that dress of a cook?

MANUS. It was at a tailor's place near Oughtmana. There was no one in the house but the mother. I left my own clothes in her charge and my purse of gold; I brought nothing but my own blue sword. [*Throws open blouse and shows it.*] She gave me this suit, where a cook from this house had thrown it down in payment for a drink of milk. I have no mind any person should know I am a king. I am letting on to be a cook.

NURSE. I would sooner you to come as a champion seeking battle, or a horseman that had gone astray, or so far as a poet making praises or curses according to his treatment on the road. It would be a bad day I would see your father's son taken for a kitchen boy.

MANUS. I was through the world last night in a dream. It was dreamed to me that the King's daughter in this house is in a great danger.

NURSE. So she is, at the end of a twelvemonth.

MANUS. My warning was for this day. Seeing her under trouble in my dream, my heart was hot to come to her help. I am here to save her, to meet every troublesome thing that will come at her.

NURSE. Oh, my heavy blessing on you doing that!

MANUS. I was not willing to come as a king, that she would feel tied and bound to live for if I live, or to die with if I

should die. I am come as a poor unknown man, that may slip away after the fight, to my own kingdom or across the borders of the world, and no thanks given him and no more about him, but a memory of the shadow of a cook!

NURSE. I would not think that to be right, and you the last of your race. It is best for you to tell the King.

MANUS. I lay my orders on you to tell no one at all.

NURSE. Give me leave but to *whisper* it to the Princess Nu. It's ye would be the finest two the world ever saw. You will not find her equal in all Ireland!

MANUS. I lay it as crosses and as spells on you to say no word to her or to any other that will make known my race or my name. Give me now your oath.

NURSE [*kneeling*]. I do, I do. But they will know you by your high looks.

MANUS. Did you yourself know me a while ago?

NURSE [*getting up*]. Oh, they're coming! Oh, my poor child, what way will you that never handled a spit be able to make out a dinner for the King?

MANUS. This silver whistle, that was her pipe of music, was given to me by a queen among the Sidhe that is my godmother. At the sound of it there will come through the air any earthly thing I wish for, at my command.

NURSE. Let it be a dinner so.

MANUS. So it will come, on a green tablecloth carried by four swans as white as snow. The freshest of every meat, the oldest of every drink, nuts from the trees in Adam's Paradise!

[*King, Queen, Princess, Dall Glic come in. Princess sits on window sill.*]

QUEEN [*to King*]. Here now, my dear. Wasn't I telling you I would take all trouble from your mind, and that I would not be without finding a cook for you?

KING. He came in a good hour. The want of a right dinner has downed kingdoms before this.

QUEEN. Traveling he is in search of service from the kings of the earth. His wages are in no way out of measure.

KING. Is he a good hand at his trade?

QUEEN. Honest he is, I believe, and ready to give a hand here and there.

KING. What way does he handle flesh, I'd wish to know? And all that comes up from the tide? Bream, now; that is a fish is very pleasant to me — stewed or fried with butter till the bones of it melt in your mouth. There is nothing in sea or strand but is the better of a quality cook — only oysters, that are best left alone, being as they are all gravy and fat.

QUEEN. I didn't question him yet about cookery.

KING. It's seldom I met a woman with right respect for food, but for show and silly dishes and trash that would leave you in the finish as dwindled as a badger on St. Bridget's day.

QUEEN. If this youth of a young man was able to give satisfaction at the King of Sorcha's Court, I am sure that he will make a dinner to please yourself.

MANUS. I will do more than that. I will dress a dinner that will please *my*self.

PRINCESS [*clapping hands*]. Very well said!

KING. Sound out now some good dishes such as you used to be giving in Sorcha, and the Queen will put them down in a line of writing, that I can be thinking about them till such time as you will have them readied.

QUEEN. There are sheeps' trotters below; you might know some tasty way to dress them.

MANUS. I do surely. I'll put the trotters within a fowl, and the fowl within a goose, and the goose in a suckling pig, and the suckling pig in a fat lamb, and the lamb in a calf, and the calf in a Maderalla . . .

KING. What now is a Maderalla?

MANUS. He is a beast that saves the cook trouble, swallowing all those meats one after another — in Sorcha.

KING. That should be a very pretty dish. Let you go make a start with it the way we will not be famished before nightfall. Bring him, Dall Glic, to the larder.

DALL GLIC. I'm in dread it's as good for him to stop where he is.

KING. What are you saying?

DALL GLIC. Those lads of apprentices that left nothing in it only bare hooks.

NURSE. It is the Queen would give no leave for more provision to come in, saying there was no one to prepare it.

MANUS. If that is so, I will be forced to lay my orders on the Hawk of the Grey Rock and the Brown Otter of the Stream to bring in meat at my bidding.

KING. Hurry on so.

QUEEN. I myself will go and give you instructions what way to use the kitchen.

MANUS. Not at all! What I do I'd as lief do in your own royal parlor! [*Blows whistle; two dark-skinned men come in with vessels.*] Give me here those pots and pans!

QUEEN. What now is about to take place?

DALL GLIC. I not to be blind, I would say those to be very foreign-looking men.

KING. It would seem as if the world was grown to be very queer.

QUEEN. So it is, and the mastery being given to a cook.

MANUS. So it should be too! It is the King of Shades and Shadows would have rule over the world if it wasn't for the cooks!

KING. There's some sense in that now.

[*Strange men are moving and arranging baskets and vessels.*]

MANUS. There was respect for cooks in the early days of the world. What way did the Sons of Tuireann get their death but going questing after a cooking spit at the bidding of Lugh of the Long Hand! And if a spit was worthy of the death of heroes, what should the man be worth that is

skilled in turning it? What is the difference between man and beast? Beast and bird devour what they find and have no power to change it. But we are Druids of those mysteries, having magic and virtue to turn hard grain to tender cakes, and the very skin of a grunting pig to crackling causing quarrels among champions, and it singing upon the coals. A cook! If I am, I am not without good generations before me! Who was the first old father of us, roasting and reddening the fruits of the earth from hard to soft, from bitter to kind, till they are fit for a lady's platter? What is it leaves us in the hard cold of Christmas but the robbery from earth of warmth for the kitchen fire of [*Takes off cap.*] the first and foremost of all master cooks — the Sun!

PRINCESS. You are surely not ashamed of your trade!

MANUS. To work now, to work. I'll engage to turn out a dinner fit for Pharaoh of Egypt or Pharamond King of the Franks! Here, Queen, is a silver-breast phœnix — draw out the feathers — they are pure silver — fair and clean. [*Queen plucks eagerly.*] King, take your golden scepter and stir this pot. [*Gives him one.*]

KING [*interested*]. What now is in it?

MANUS. A broth that will rise over the side and be consumed and split if you stop stirring it for one minute only! [*King stirs furiously.*] Princess [*She is looking on and he goes over to her.*] there are honey cakes to roll out, but I will not ask you to do it in dread that you might spoil the whiteness . . .

PRINCESS. I have no mind to do it.

MANUS. Of the flour!

PRINCESS. Give them here. [*Rolls them out indignantly.*]

MANUS. That is right. Take care, King, would the froth swell over the brim.

PRINCESS. It seems to me you are doing but little yourself.

MANUS. I will turn now and . . . boil these eggs.

[*Takes some on a plate; they roll off.*]

PRINCESS. You have broken them.

MANUS [*disconcerted*]. It was to show you a good trick, how to make them sit up on the narrow end.

PRINCESS. That is an old trick in the world.

MANUS. Every trick is an old one, but with a change of players, a change of dress, it comes out as new as before. Princess [*Speaks low.*], I have a message to give you and a pardon to ask.

PRINCESS. Give me out the message.

MANUS. Take courage and keep courage through this day. Do not let your heart fail. There is help beside you.

PRINCESS. It has been a troublesome day indeed. But there is a worse one and a great danger before me in the far away.

MANUS. That danger will come to-day, the message said in the dream. Princess, I have a pardon to ask you. I have been playing vanities. I think I have wronged you doing this. It was surely through no want of respect.

GATEKEEPER [*coming in*]. There is word come from Ballyvelehan there is a coach and horses facing for this place over from Oughtmana.

QUEEN. Who would that be?

GATEKEEPER. Up on the hill a woman was, brought word it must be some high gentleman. She could see all colors in the coach, and flowers on the horse's heads. [*Goes out.*]

DALL GLIC. That is good hearing. I was in dread some man we would have no welcome for would be the first to come in this day.

QUEEN. Not a fear of it. I had orders given to the Gateman who he would and would not keep out. I did that the very minute after the King making his proclamation and his law.

KING. Pup, pup. You need not be drawing that down.

QUEEN. It is well you have myself to care you and to turn all to good. I gave orders to the Gateman, I say, no one to be let in to the door unless carriage company, no other ones, even if they should wipe their feet upon the mat.

I notched that in his mind, telling him the King was after promising the Princess Nu in marriage to the first man that would come into the house.

MANUS. The King gave out that word?

QUEEN. I am after saying that he did.

DALL GLIC. Come along, lad. Don't be putting ears on yourself.

MANUS. I ask the King did he give out that promise as the Queen says?

KING. I have but a poor memory.

NURSE. The King did say it within the hour, and swore to it by the oath of his people, taking contracts of the sun and moon of the air!

DALL GLIC. What is it to you if he did? Come on, now.

MANUS. No. This is a matter that concerns myself.

QUEEN. How do you make that out?

MANUS. You, that called me in, know well that I was the first to come into the house.

QUEEN. Ha, ha! You have the impudence! It is a *man* the King said. He was not talking about cooks.

MANUS [*to the King*]. I am before you as a serving lad, and you are a King in Ireland. Because you are a King and I your hired servant, you will not refuse me justice. You gave your word.

KING. If I did, it was in haste and in vexation, and striving to save her from destruction.

MANUS. I call you to keep to your word and to give your daughter to no other one.

QUEEN. Speak out now, Dall Glic, and give your opinion and your advice.

DALL GLIC. I would say that this lad going away would be no great loss.

MANUS. I did not ask such a thing; but as it has come to me, I will hold to my right.

QUEEN. It would be right to throw him to the hounds in the kennel!

MANUS [*to King*]. I leave it to the judgment of your blind wise man.

QUEEN [*to Dall Glic*]. Take care would you offend myself or the King!

MANUS. I put it on you to split justice as it is measured outside the world.

DALL GLIC. It is hard for me to speak. He has laid it hard on me. My good eye may go asleep, but my blind eye never sleeps. In the place where it is waking, an honorable man, king or beggar, is held to his word.

KING. Is it that I must give my daughter to a lad that owns neither clod nor furrow? Whose estate is but a shovel for the ashes and a tongs for the red coals.

QUEEN. It is likely he is urged by the sting of greed — it is but riches he is looking for.

KING. I will not begrudge him his own asking of silver and of gold!

MANUS. Throw it out to the beggars on the road! I would not take a copper half-penny! I'll take nothing but what has come to me from your own word!

[*King bows his head.*]

PRINCESS [*coming forward*]. Then this battle is not between you and an old king that is feeble, but between yourself and myself.

MANUS. I am sorry, Princess, if it must be a battle.

PRINCESS. You can never bring me away against my will.

MANUS. I said no word of doing that.

PRINCESS. You think, so, I will go with you of myself? The day I will do that will be the day you empty the ocean!

MANUS. I will not wait longer than to-day.

PRINCESS. Many a man waited seven years for a king's daughter!

MANUS. And another seven — and seven generations of hags. But that is not my nature. I will not kneel to any woman, high or low, or crave kindness that she cannot give.

PRINCESS. Then I can go free!

MANUS. For this day I take you in my charge. I cross and claim you to myself, unless a better man will come.

PRINCESS. I would think it easier to find a better man than one that would be worse to me!

MANUS. If one should come that you think to be a better man, I will give you your own way.

PRINCESS. It is you being in the world at all that is my grief.

MANUS. Time makes all things clear. You did not go far out in the world yet, my poor little Princess.

PRINCESS. I would be well pleased to drive you out through the same world!

MANUS. With or without your goodwill, I will not go out of this place till I have carried out the business I came to do.

DALL GLIC. Is it the falling of hailstones I hear or the rumbling of thunder, or is it the trots of horses upon the road?

QUEEN [*looking out*]. It is the big man that is coming — Prince or Lord or whoever he may be. [*To Dall Glic.*] Go now to the door to welcome him. This is some man worth while. [*To Manus.*] Let you get out of this.

MANUS. No, whoever he is I'll stop and face him. Let him know we are players in the one game!

KING. And what sort of a fool will you make of me, to have given in to take the like of you for a son-in-law? They will be putting ridicule on me in the songs.

QUEEN. If he must stop here, we might put some face on him. . . . If I had but a decent suit. . . . Give me your cloak, Dall Glic. [*He gives it.*] Here now . . . [*To Manus.*] Put this around you. . . . [*Manus takes it awkwardly.*] It will cover up your kitchen suit.

MANUS. Is it this way?

QUEEN. You have no right handling of it — stupid clown! This way!

MANUS [*flinging it off*]. No, I'll change no more suits! It is time for me to stop fooling and give you what you did not ask yet, my name. I will tell out all the truth.

GATEKEEPER [*at door*]. The King of Sorcha!

[*Taig comes in.*]

KING AND QUEEN. The King of Sorcha!

[*They rush forward to greet him.*]

NURSE [*to Manus*]. Did ever any one hear the like!

MANUS. It seems as if there will be a judgment between the man and the clothes!

QUEEN [*to Taig*]. There is some one here that you know, King. This young man is giving out that he was your cook.

TAIG. He was not. I never laid an eye on him till this minute.

QUEEN. I was sure he was nothing but a liar when he said he would tell the truth! Now, King, will you turn him out the door?

KING. And what about the great dinner he has me promised?

MANUS. Be easy, King. Whether or no you keep your word to me; I'll hold to mine! [*Blows whistle.*] In with the dishes! Take your places! Let the music play out!

[*Music plays, the strange men wheel in tables and dishes.*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: *Table cleared of all but vessels of fruit, coconuts, etc. Queen and Taig sitting in front, Nurse and Dall Glic standing in background.*

QUEEN. Now, King, the dinner being at an end, and the music, we have time and quiet to be talking.

TAIG. It is with the King's daughter I am come to talk.

QUEEN. Go, Dall Glic, call the Princess. She will be here on the minute, but it is best for you to tell me out if it is to ask her in marriage you are come.

TAIG. It is so, where I was after being told she would be given as a wife to the first man that would come into the house.

QUEEN. And who in the world wide gave that out?

TAIG. It was the Gateman said it to a hawker bringing lobsters from the strand, and that got no leave to cross the threshold by reason of the oath given out by the King. The half of the kingdom she will get, they were telling me, and the king living, and the whole of it after he will be dead.

NURSE. There did another come in before you. Let me tell you that much!

TAIG. There did not. The lobster man that set a watch upon the door.

QUEEN. A great honor you did us coming asking for her, and you being King of Sorcha!

TAIG. Look at my ring and my crown. They will bear witness that I am. And my kind coat of cotton and my golden shirt! And under that again there's a stiff pocket. [*Slaps it.*] Is there e'er a looking-glass in any place?

[*Gets up.*]

DALL GLIC. There is the shining silver basin of the swans in the garden without.

TAIG. That will do. I would wish to look tasty when I come looking for a lady of a wife.

[*He and Dall Glic go outside window but in sight.*]

[*Princess comes in very proud and sad.*]

QUEEN. You should be proud this day, Nuala, and so grand a man coming asking you in marriage as the King of Sorcha.

NURSE. Grand, indeed! As grand as hands and pins can make him.

PRINCESS. Are you not satisfied to have urged me to one man and promised me to another since sunrise?

QUEEN. What way could I know there was this match on the way, and a better match beyond measure? This is

no black stranger going the road, but a man having a copper crown over his gateway and a silver crown over his palace door! I tell you he has means to hang a pearl of gold upon every rib of your hair! There is no one ahead of him in all Ireland, with his chain and his ring and his suit of the dearest silk!

PRINCESS. If it was a suit I was to wed with, he might do well enough.

QUEEN. Equal in blood to ourselves! Brought up to good behavior and courage and mannerly ways.

PRINCESS. In my opinion he is not.

QUEEN. You are talking foolishness. A King of Sorcha must be mannerly, seeing it is he himself sets the tune for manners.

PRINCESS. He gave out a laugh when old Michelin slipped on the threshold. He kicked at the dog under the table that came looking for bones.

QUEEN. I tell you what might be ugly behavior in a common man is suitable and right in a king. But you are so hard to please and so pettish, I am seven times tired of yourself and your ways.

PRINCESS. If no one could force me to give in to the man that made a claim to me to-day, according to my father's bond, that bond is there yet to protect me from any other one.

QUEEN. Leave me alone! Myself and the Dall Glic will take means to rid you of that lad from the oven. I'll send in now to you the King of Sorcha. Let you show civility to him, and the wedding-day will be to-morrow.

PRINCESS. I will not see him; I will have nothing to do with him; I tell you if he had the rents of the whole world I would not go with him by day or by night, on foot or on horseback, in light or in darkness, in company or alone!

[*Queen has gone while she cries this out.*]

NURSE. The luck of the seven Saturdays on himself and on the Queen!

PRINCESS. Oh, Muime, do not let him come near me! Have you no way to help me?

NURSE. It's myself that could help you if I was not under bonds not to speak!

PRINCESS. What is it you know? Why won't you say one word?

NURSE. He put me under spells. . . . There now, my tongue turned with the word to be dumb.

TAIG [*at the window*]. Not a fear of me, Queen. It won't be long till I bring the Princess around.

PRINCESS. I will not stay! Keep him here till I will hide myself out of sight! [*Goes.*]

TAIG [*coming in*]. They told me the Princess was in it.

NURSE. She has good sense; she is in some other place.

TAIG [*sitting down*]. Go call her to me.

NURSE. Who is it I will call her for?

TAIG. For myself. You know who I am.

NURSE. My grief that I do not!

TAIG. I am the King of Sorcha.

NURSE. If you say that lie again, there will blisters rise up on your face.

TAIG. Take care what you are saying, you hag!

NURSE. I know well what I am saying. I have good judgment between the noble and the mean blood of the world.

TAIG. The Kings of Sorcha have high, noble blood.

NURSE. If they have, there is not so much of it in you as would redden a rib of scutch-grass.

TAIG. You are crazed with folly and age.

NURSE. No, but I have my wits good enough. You ought to be as slippery as a living eel, I'll get satisfaction on you yet! I'll show out who you are:

TAIG. Who am I so?

NURSE. That is what I have to get knowledge of, if I must ask it at the mouth of cold hell!

TAIG. Do your best! I dare you!

NURSE. I will save my darling from you as sure as there's rocks on the strand! A girl that refused sons of the kings of the world!

TAIG. And I will drag your darling from you as sure as there's foxes in Oughtmana!

NURSE. Oughtmana . . . Is that now your living place?

TAIG. It is not. . . . I told you I came from the far-off kingdom of Sorcha. Look at my cloak that has on it the sign of the risen sun!

NURSE. Cloaks and suits and fringes! You have a great deal of talk of them. . . . Have you e'er a needle around you, or a shears?

TAIG [*His hand goes to breast of coat, but he withdraws it quickly.*] Here . . . no . . . What are you talking about? I know nothing at all of such things.

NURSE. In my opinion you do. Hearken now. I know where is the real King of Sorcha!

TAIG. Bring him before me now till I'll down him!

NURSE. Say that the time you will come face to face with him! Well, I'm under bonds to tell out nothing about him, but I have liberty to make known all I will find out about yourself.

TAIG. Hurry on so. Little I care when once I'm wed with the King's daughter!

NURSE. That will never be!

TAIG. The Queen is befriending me and in dread of losing me. I will threaten her if there is any delay, I'll go look for another girl of a wife.

NURSE. I will make no delay. I'll have my story and my testimony before the white dawn of the morrow.

TAIG. Do so and welcome! Before the yellow light of this evening I'll be the King's son-in-law! Bring your news, then, and little thanks you'll get for it! The King and Queen must keep up my name then for their own credit's sake.

[*Makes a face at her as King comes in with Dall Glic,*

and servants with cushions. Nurse goes out, shaking her fist.]

[*Rises.*] I was just asking to see you, King, to say there is a hurry on me. . . .

KING [*sitting down on window-seat while Servant arranges cushions about him*]. Keep your business a while. It's a poor thing to be going through business the very minute the dinner is ended.

TAIG. I wouldn't but that it is pressing.

KING. Go now to the Queen, in her parlor, and be chatting and whistling to the birds. I give you my word since I rose up from the table, I am going here and there, up and down, craving and striving to find a place where I'll get leave to lay my head on the cushions for one little minute. [*Taig goes reluctantly.*]

DALL GLIC [*taking cushions from servants*]. Let you go now and leave the King to his rest. [*They go out.*]

KING. I don't know in the world why any one would consent to be a king, and never to be left to himself, but to be worried and wearied and interfered with from dark to daybreak and from morning to the fall of night.

DALL GLIC. I will be going out now. I have but one word only to say . . .

KING. Let it be a short word! I would be better pleased to hear the sound of breezes in the sycamores, and the humming of bees in the hive and the crooning and sleepy sounds of the sea!

DALL GLIC. There is one thing only could cause me to annoy you.

KING. It should be a queer big thing that wouldn't wait till I have my rest taken.

DALL GLIC. So it is a big matter, and a weighty one.

KING. Not to be left in quiet and all I am after using! Food that was easy to eat! Drink that was easy to drink! That's the dinner that *was* a dinner. That cook now is a wonder!

DALL GLIC. That is now the very one I am wishful to speak about.

KING. I give you my word, I'd sooner have one goose dressed by him than seven dressed by any other one!

DALL GLIC. The Queen that was urging me for to put my mind to make out some way to get quit of him.

KING. Isn't it a hard thing the very minute I find a lad can dress a dinner to my liking, I must be made an attack on to get quit of him?

DALL GLIC. It is on the head of the Princess Nu.

KING. Tell me this, Dall Glic. Supposing, now, he was . . . in spite of me . . . to wed with her . . . against my will . . . and it might be unknownst to me.

DALL GLIC. Such a thing must not happen.

KING. To be sure, it must not happen. Why would it happen? But supposing — I only said supposing it did. Would you say would that lad grow too high in himself to go into the kitchen . . . it might be only an odd time . . . to oblige me . . . and dress a dinner the same as he did to-day?

DALL GLIC. I am sure and certain that he would not. It is the way, it is, with the common sort, the lower orders. He'd be wishful to sit on a chair at his ease and to leave his hand idle till he'd grow to be bulky and wishful for sleep.

KING. That is a pity, a great pity, and a great loss to the world. A big misfortune he to have got it in his head to take a liking to the girl. I tell you he was a great lad behind the saucepans!

DALL GLIC. Since he did get it in his head, it is what we have to do now, to make an end of him.

KING. To jail him now, and settle up ovens and spits and all sorts in the cell, wouldn't he, to shorten the day, be apt to start cooking?

DALL GLIC. In my belief he will do nothing at all, but to hold you to the promise you made, and to force you to send away the King of Sorcha.

KING. To have the misfortune of a cook for a son-in-law, and without the good luck of profiting by what he can do in his trade! That is a hard thing for a father to put up with, let alone a king!

DALL GLIC. If you will but listen to the advice I have to give . . .

KING. I know it without you telling me. You are asking me to make away with the lad! And who knows but the girl might turn on me after, women are so queer, and say I had a right to have asked leave from herself?

DALL GLIC. There will no one suspect you of doing it, and you to take my plan. Bid them heat the big oven outside on the lawn that is for roasting a bullock in its full bulk.

KING. Don't be talking of roasted meat! I think I can eat no more for a twelvemonth!

DALL GLIC. There will be nothing roasted that any person will have occasion to eat. When the oven door will be open, give orders to your bullies and your foot-soldiers to give a tip to him that will push him in. When evening comes, news will go out that he left the meat to burn and made off on his rambles, and no more about him.

KING. What way can I send orders when I'm near crazed in my wits with the want of rest? A little minute of sleep might soothe and settle my brain. [*Lies down.*]

DALL GLIC. The least little word to give leave . . . or a sign . . . such as to nod the head.

KING. I give you my word, my head is tired nodding! Be off now and close the door after you and give out that any one that comes to this side of the house at all in the next half-hour, his neck will be on the block before morning!

DALL GLIC [*hurriedly*]. I'm going! I'm going. [*Goes.*]

KING [*locking door and drawing window curtains*]. That you may never come back till I ask you! [*Lies down and settles himself on pillows.*] I'll be lying here in my lone listening to the pigeons seeking their meal. "Coo-coo," they're saying, "Coo-coo." [*Closes eyes.*]

NURSE [*at door*]. Who is it locked the door? [*Shakes it.*] Who is it is in it? What is going on within? Is it that some bad work is after being done in this place? Hi! Hi! Hi!

KING [*sitting up*]. Get away out of that, you torment of a nurse! Be off before I'll have the life of you!

NURSE. The Lord be praised, it is the King's own voice! There's time yet!

KING. There's time, is there? There's time for every one to give out their chat and their gab, and to do their business and take their ease and have a comfortable life, only the King! The beasts of the field have leave to lay themselves down in the meadow and to stretch their limbs on the green grass in the heat of the day, without being pestered and plagued and tormented and called to and wakened and worried, till a man is no less than wore out!

NURSE. Up or down, I'll say what I have to say, if it costs me my life. It is that I have to tell you of a plot that is made and a plan!

KING. I won't listen! I heard enough of plots and plans within the last three minutes!

NURSE. You didn't hear this one. No one knows of it only myself.

KING. I was told it by the Dall Glic.

NURSE. You were not! I am only after making it out on the moment!

KING. A plot against the lad of the saucepans?

NURSE. That's it! That's it! Open now the door!

KING [*putting a cushion over each ear and settling himself to sleep*]. Tell away and welcome! [*Shuts eyes.*]

NURSE. That's right! You're listening. Give heed now. That schemer came a while ago letting on to be the King of Sorcha is no such thing! What do you say? . . . Maybe you knew it before? I wonder the Dall Glic not to have seen that for himself with his one eye. . . . Maybe you don't believe it? Well, I'll tell it out and prove it. I have got sure word by running messenger that came cross-cutting

over the ridge of the hill. . . . That carrion that came in a coach, pressing to bring away the Princess before nightfall, giving himself out to be some great one, is no other than Taig the Tailor, that should be called Taig the Twister, down from his mother's house from Oughtmana, that stole grand clothes which were left in the mother's charge, he being out at the time cutting cloth and shaping lies, and has himself dressed out in them the way you'd take him to be King! [*King has slumbered peacefully all through.*] Now, what do you say? Now, will you open the door?

QUEEN [*outside*]. What call have you to shouting and disturbing the King?

NURSE. I have good right and good reason to disturb him!

QUEEN. Go away and let me open the door.

NURSE. I will go and welcome now; I have told out my whole story to the King.

QUEEN [*shaking door*]. Open the door, my dear! It is I myself that is here! [*King looks up, listens, shakes his head and sinks back.*] Are you there at all, or what is it ails you?

NURSE. He is there, and is after conversing with myself.

QUEEN [*shaking again*]. Let me in, my dear King! Open! Open! Open! unless that the falling sickness is come upon you, or that you are maybe lying dead upon the floor!

NURSE. Not a dead in the world.

QUEEN. Go, Nurse, I tell you, bring the smith from the anvil till he will break asunder the lock of the door!

[*King, annoyed, waddles to door and opens it suddenly. Queen stumbles in.*]

KING. What at all has taken place that you come bawling and calling and disturbing my rest?

QUEEN. Oh! Are you sound and well? I was in dread there did something come upon you, when you gave no answer at all.

KING. Am I bound to answer every call and clamor the same as a hall-porter at the door?

QUEEN. It is business that cannot wait. Here now is a request I have written to the bully of the King of Alban, bidding him to strike the head off whatever man will put the letter in his hand. Write your name and sign to it, in three royal words.

KING. I wouldn't sign a letter out of my right hour if it was to make the rivers run gold. There is nothing comes of signing letters but more trouble in the end.

QUEEN. Give me, so, to bind it a drop of your own blood as a token and a seal. You will not refuse, and I telling you the messenger will go with it, and that will lose his head through it, is no less than that troublesome cook!

KING [*with a roar*]. Any one to say that word again I will not leave a head on any neck in the kingdom! I declare on my oath it would be best for me to take the world for my pillow and put that lad upon the throne!

[*Queen goes back frightened to door.*]

GATEMAN [*coming in*]. There is a man coming in that will take no denial. It is Fintan the Astrologer.

[*Fintan enters with Dall Glic, Nurse, Princess, Taig, Manus and Prince of the Marshes crowding after him.*]

KING. Another disturbance! The whole world would seem to be on the move!

QUEEN. Fintan! What brings him here again?

FINTAN. A great deceit? A terrible deception!

KING. What at all is it?

FINTAN. Long and all as I'm in the world, such a thing never happened in my lifetime!

QUEEN. What is it has happened?

FINTAN. It is not any fault of myself or any miscounting of my own! I am certain sure of that much. Is it that the stars of heaven are gone astray, they that are all one with a clock — unless it might be on a stormy night when they are wild-looking around the moon.

KING. Go on with your story and stop your raving.

FINTAN. The first time ever I came to this place I made a prophecy.

DALL GLIC. You did, about the child was in the cradle.

FINTAN. And that was but new in the world. It is what I said, that she was born under a certain star, and that in a score of years all but two, whatever acting was going on in that star at the time she was born, she would get her crosses in the same way.

DALL GLIC. The cross you foretold to her was to be ate by a Dragon. You laid down it would come upon a twelve-month from this very day.

FINTAN. That's it. That was according to my reckoning. There was no mistake in that. And I thought better of the Seven Stars than they to make a fool of me, after all the respect I had showed them, giving my life to watching themselves and the plans they have laid down for men and for mortals.

KING. It seems as if I myself was the best prophet and that there is no Dragon at all.

FINTAN. What a bad opinion you have of me that I would be so far out as that! It would be a deception and a disappointment out of measure, there to come no Dragon, and I after foretelling and prophesying him.

KING. Troth, it would be no disappointment at all to ourselves.

FINTAN. It would be better, I tell you, a score of king's daughters to be ate and devoured, than the high stars in their courses to be proved wrong. But it must be right, it surely must be right. I gave the prophecy according to her birth hour, that was one hour before the falling back of the sun.

DALL GLIC. It was not, but an hour before the rising of the sun.

FINTAN. Not at all! It was the Nurse herself told me it was at evening she was born.

QUEEN. There is the Nurse now. Let you ask her account.

FINTAN [*to Nurse*]. It was yourself laid down it was evening!

NURSE. Sure I wasn't in the place at all till Samhuin time, when she was near three months in the world.

FINTAN. Then it was some other hag, the very spit of you! I wish she didn't tell a lie.

NURSE. Sure that one was banished out of this on the head of telling lies. An hour ere sunrise, and before the crowing of the cocks. The Dall Glic will tell you that much.

DALL GLIC. That is so. I have it marked upon the genealogies in the chest.

FINTAN. That is great news! It was a heavy wrong was done me! It had me greatly upset. Twelve hours out in laying down the birth-time! That clears the character of myself and of the carwheel of the stars. I knew I could make no mistake in my office and in my billet!

KING. Will you stop praising yourself and give out some sense?

FINTAN. Knowledge is surely the greatest thing in the world! And truth! Twelve hours with the planets is equal to twelve months on earth. I am well satisfied now.

QUEEN. So the Dragon is not coming, and the girl is in no danger at all?

FINTAN. Not coming! Heaven help your poor head! Didn't I get word within the last half-hour he is after leaving his den in the Kingdoms of the Cold, and is at this minute ploughing his way to Ireland, the same as I foretold him, but that I made a miscount of a year?

NURSE [*putting her arm round Princess*]. Och! do not listen or give heed to him at all!

QUEEN. When is he coming so?

FINTAN. Amn't I tired telling you this day in the place of this day twelvemonth? But as to the minute, there's too much lies in this place for me to be rightly sure.

KING. The curse of the seven elements upon him!

FINTAN. Little he'll care for your cursing. The whole world wouldn't stop him coming to your own grand gate.

PRINCESS [*coming forward*]. Then I am to die to-night?

FINTAN. You are, without he will be turned back by some one having a stronger star than your own, and I know of no star is better, unless it might be the sun.

QUEEN. If you had minded me, and given in to ring the wedding bells, you would be safe out of this before now.

FINTAN. That Dragon not to find her before him, he will ravage and destroy the whole district with the poisonous spittle of his jaw, till the want will be so great the father will disown his son and will not let him in the door. Well, good-bye to ye! Ye'll maybe believe me to have foreknowledge another time, and I proved to be right. I have knocked great comfort out of that! [*Goes.*]

KING. Oh, my poor child! My poor little Nu! I thought it never would come to pass, I to be sending you to the slaughter. And I too bulky to go out and face him, having led an easy life!

PRINCESS. Do not be fretting.

KING. The world is gone to and fro! I'll never ask satisfaction again either in bed or board, but to be wasting away with watercresses and rising up of a morning before the sun rises in Babylon! [*Weeps.*] Oh, we might make out a way to baffle him yet! Is there no meal will serve him only flesh and blood? Try him with Grecian wine, and with what was left of the big dinner a while ago!

GATEMAN [*coming in*]. There is some strange thing in the ocean from Aran out. At first it was but like a bird's shadow on the sea, and now you would nearly say it to be the big island would have left its moorings, and it steering its course towards Aughanish!

DALL GLIC. I'm in dread it should be the Dragon that has cleared the ocean at a leap!

KING [*holding Princess*]. I will not give you up! Let him devour myself along with you!

DALL GLIC [*to Princess*]. It is best for me to put you in a hiding-hole under the ground, that has seven locked doors

and seven locks on the farthest door. It might fail him to make you out.

NURSE. Oh, it would be hard for her to go where she cannot hear the voice of a friend or see the light of day!

PRINCESS. Would you wish me to save myself and let all the district perish? You heard what Fintan said. It is not right for destruction to be put on a whole province, and the women and the children that I know.

QUEEN. There is maybe time yet for you to wed.

PRINCESS. So long as I am living I have a choice. I will not be saved in that way. It is alone I will be in my death.

MANUS [*coming to King*]. I am going out from you, King. I might not be coming in to you again. I would wish to set you free from the promise you made me a while ago, and the bond.

KING. What does it signify now? What does anything signify, and the world turning here and there!

MANUS. And another thing. I would wish to ask pardon of the King's daughter. I ought not to have laid any claim to her, being a stranger in this place and without treasure or attendance. And yet . . . and yet . . . [*Stoops and kisses hem of her dress.*] she was dear to me. It is a man who never may look on her again is saying that. [*Turns to door.*]

TAIG. He is going to run from the Dragon! It is kind father for a scullion to be timid!

QUEEN. It is in his blood. He is maybe not to blame for what is according to his nature.

MANUS. That is so. I am doing what is according to my nature. [*Goes. Nurse goes after him.*]

QUEEN [*to Dall Glic*]. Go throw a dishcloth after him that the little lads may be mocking him along the road!

DALL GLIC. I will not. I have meddled enough at your bidding. I am done with living under dread. Let you blind me entirely! I am free of you. It might be best for me the two eyes to be withered, and I seeing nothing but the ever-living laws!

PRINCE OF MARSHES [*coming to Princess*]. It is my grief that with all the teachers I had there was not one to learn me the handling of weapons or of arms. But for all that I will not run away, but will strive to strike one blow in your defence against that wicked beast.

PRINCESS. It is a good friend that would rid us of him. But it grieves me that you should go into such danger.

PRINCE OF MARSHES [*to Dall Glic*]. Give me some sword or casting spears. [*Dall Glic gives him spears.*]

PRINCESS. I am sorry I made fun of you a while ago. I think you are a good kind man.

PRINCE OF MARSHES [*kissing her hand*]. Having that word of praise, I will bring a good heart into the fight.

[*Goes. Taig is slipping out after him.*]

QUEEN. See now the King of Sorcha slipping away into the fight. Stop here now! [*Pulls him back.*] You have a life that is precious to many besides yourself. Do not go without being well armed — and with a troop of good fighting-men at your back.

TAIG. I am greatly obliged to you. I think I'll be best with myself.

QUEEN. You have no suit or armor upon you.

TAIG. That is what I was thinking.

QUEEN. Here anyway is a sword.

TAIG [*taking it*]. That's a nice belt now. Well worked, silver thread and gold.

QUEEN. The King's own guard will go out with you.

TAIG. I wouldn't ask one of them! What would you think of me wanting help! A Dragon! Little I'd think of him. I'll knock the life out of him. I'll give him cruelty!

QUEEN. You have great courage indeed!

TAIG. I'll cut him crossways and lengthways the same as a yard of frieze! I'll make garters of his body! I'll smooth him with a smoothing-iron! Not a fear of me! I never lost a bet yet that I wasn't able to pay it!

GATEMAN [*As he rushes in, Taig slips away*]. The Dragon!

The Dragon! I seen it coming and its mouth open and a fiery flame from it! And nine miles of the sea is dry with all it drank of it! The whole country is gathering the same as of a fair day for to see him devour the Princess.

[*Princess trembles and sinks into a chair. King, Queen, and Dall Glic look from window. They turn to her as they speak.*]

QUEEN. There is a terrible splashing in the sea! It is like as if the Dragon's tail had beaten it into suds of soap!

DALL GLIC. He is near as big as a whale!

KING. He is, and bigger!

QUEEN. I see him! I see him! He would seem to have seven heads!

DALL GLIC. I see but one.

QUEEN. You would see more if you had your two eyes! He has six heads at the least!

KING. He has but one. He is twisting and turning it around.

DALL GLIC. He is coming up towards the flaggy shore!

KING. I hear him! He is snoring like a flock of pigs!

QUEEN. He is rearing his head in the air! He has teeth as long as a tongs!

DALL GLIC. No, but his tail he is rearing up! It would take a ladder forty feet long to get to the tip of it!

QUEEN. There is the King of Sorcha going out the gate for to make an end of him.

DALL GLIC. So he is, too. That is great bravery.

KING. He is going to one side. He is come to a stop.

DALL GLIC. It seems to me he is ready to fall in his standing. He is gone into a little thicket of furze. He is not coming out, but is lying crouched up in it the same as a hare in a tuft. I can see his shoulders narrowed up.

QUEEN. He maybe got a weakness.

KING. He did, maybe, of courage. Shaking and shivering, he is like a hen in thunder. In my opinion, he is hiding from the fight.

QUEEN. There is the Prince of the Marshes going out now, and his coach after him! And his two aunts sitting in it and screeching to him not to run into danger!

KING. He will not do much. He has not pith or power to handle arms. That sort brings a bad name on kings.

DALL GLIC. He is gone away from the coach. He is facing to the flaggy shore!

QUEEN. Oh, the Dragon has put up his head and is spitting at him!

KING. He has cast a spear into its jaw! Good man!

[*Princess goes over to window.*]

DALL GLIC. He is casting another! His hand shook . . . it did not go straight. He is gone on again! He has cast another spear! It should hit the beast . . . it let a roar!

PRINCESS. Good little Prince! What way is the battle now?

DALL GLIC. It will kill him with its fiery breath! He is running now . . . he is stumbling . . . the Dragon is after him! He is up again! The two Aunts have pushed him into the coach and have closed the iron door.

KING. It will fail the beast to swallow him coach and all. It is gone back to refresh itself in the sea. You can hear it puffing and plunging!

QUEEN. There is nothing to stop it now. [*To Princess.*] If you have e'er a prayer, now is the time to say it.

DALL GLIC. Stop a minute . . . there is another champion going out.

KING. A man wearing a saffron suit . . . who is he at all? He has the look of one used to giving orders.

PRINCESS [*looking out*]. Oh! he is but going to his death. It would be better for me to throw myself into the tide and make an end of it. [*Is rushing to door.*]

KING [*holding her*]. He is drawing his sword. Himself and the Dragon are thrusting at one another on the flags!

PRINCESS. Oh, close the curtains! Shut out the sound of the battle. [*Dall Glic closes curtains.*]

KING. Strike up now a tune of music that will deafen the sound!

[*Orchestra plays. Princess is kneeling by King. Music changes from discord to victory. Two Aunts and Gateman rush in. Noise of cheering heard without as the Gateman silences music.*]

GATEMAN. Great news and wonderful news and a great story!

FIRST AUNT. The fight is ended!

SECOND AUNT. The Dragon is brought to his last goal!

GATEMAN. That young fighting man that has him flogged! Made at him like a wave breaking on the strand! They crashed at one another like two days of judgment! Like the battle of the cold with the heat!

FIRST AUNT. You'd say he was going through dragons all his life!

SECOND AUNT. It can hardly put a stir out of itself!

GATEMAN. That champion has it baffled and mastered! It is after being chased over seven acres of ground!

FIRST AUNT. Drove it to its knees on the flaggy shore and made an end of it!

KING. God bless that man to-day and to-morrow!

SECOND AUNT. He has put it in a way it will eat no more kings' daughters!

PRINCESS. And the stranger that mastered it — is he safe?

FIRST AUNT. What signifies if he is or is not, so long as we have our own young prince to bring home!

GATEKEEPER. He is not safe. No sooner had he the beast killed and conquered than he fell dead, and the life went out of him.

PRINCESS. Oh, that is not right! He to be dead and I living after him!

KING. He was surely noble and high-blooded. There are some that will be sorry for his death.

PRINCESS. And who should be more sorry than I myself am sorry? Who should keen him unless myself? There is a man that gave his life for me, and he young and all his days

before him, and shut his eyes on the white world for my sake!

QUEEN. Indeed he was a man you might have been content to wed with, hard and all as you are to please.

PRINCESS. I never will wed with any man so long as my life will last, that was bought for me with a life was more worthy by far than my own! He is gone out of my reach; let him wait for me to give him my thanks on the other side. Bring me now his sword and his shield till I will put them before me and cry my eyes down with grief!

GATEMAN. Here is his cap for you, anyway, and his cleaver, and his bunch of skivers. For the champion you are crying was no other than that lad of a cook!

QUEEN. That is not true! It is not possible!

GATEMAN. Sure I seen him myself going out the gate a while ago. He put off his cook's apparel and threw it along with these behind the turfstack. I gathered them up presently and I coming in the door.

KING. The world is gone beyond me entirely! But what I was saying all through, there was something beyond the common in that boy!

QUEEN [*to Princess, who is clinging to chair*]. Let you be comforted now, knowing he cannot come back to lay claim to you in marriage, as it is likely he would, and he living.

PRINCESS. It is he saved me after my unkindness! . . . Oh, I am ashamed . . . ashamed!

QUEEN. It is a queer thing a king's daughter to be crying after a man used to twisting the spit in place of weapons, and over skivers in the place of a sword!

PRINCESS [*gropes and totters*]. What has happened? There is something gone astray! I have no respect for myself. . . . I cannot live! I am ashamed! Where is Nurse? Muime! Come to me, Muime! . . . My grief! The man that died for me, whether he is of the noble or the simple of the world, it is to him I have given the love of my soul!

[*Dall Glic supports her and lays her on window-seat.*]

NURSE [*rushing in*]. What is it, honey? What at all are they after doing to you?

QUEEN. Throw over her a skillet of water. She is gone into a faint.

DALL GLIC [*who is bending over her*]. She is in no faint. She is gone out.

NURSE. Oh, my child and my darling! What call had I to leave you among them at all?

KING. Raise her up. It is impossible she can be gone.

DALL GLIC. Gone out and spent, as sudden as a candle in a blast of wind.

KING. Who would think grief would do away with her so sudden, there to be seven of the like of him dead?

NURSE [*rises*]. What did you do to her at all, at all? Or was it through the fright and terror of the beast?

QUEEN. She died of the heartbreak, being told that the strange champion that had put down the Dragon was killed dead.

NURSE. Killed, is it? Who now put that lie out of his mouth? [*Shouts in her ear.*] What would ail him to be dead? It is myself can tell you the true story. No man in Ireland ever was half as good as him! It was himself mastered the beast and dragged the heart out of him and forced down a squirrel's heart in its place, and slapped a bridle on him. And he himself did but stagger and go to his knees in the heat and drunkenness of the battle, and rose up after as good as ever he was! It is out putting ointments on him that I was up to this, and healing up his cuts and wounds! Oh, what ails you, honey, that you will not waken?

QUEEN. She thought it to be a champion and a high-up man that had died for her sake. It is what broke her down in the latter end, hearing him to be no big man at all, but a clown!

NURSE. Oh, my darling! And I not here to tell you! You are a motherless child, and the curse of your mother will be

on me! It was no clown fought for you, but a king, having generations of kings behind him, the young King of Sorcha, Manus, son of Solas son of Lugh.

KING. I would believe that now sooner than many a thing I would hear.

NURSE [*keening*]. Oh, my child, and my share! I thought it was you would be closing my eyes, and now I am closing your own! You to be brought away in your young youth! Your hand that was whiter than the snow of one night, and the color of the foxglove on your cheek.

[*A great shouting outside and burst of music. A march played. Manus comes in, followed by Fintan and Prince of the Marshes. Shouts and music continue. He leads the Dragon by a bridle. The others are in front of Princess, huddled from the Dragon. Queen gets up on a chair.*]

MANUS. Where is the Princess Nu? I have brought this beast to bow itself at her feet.

[*All are silent. Manus flings bridle to Fintan's hand. Dragon backs out. All go aside from Princess.*]

NURSE. She is here dead before you.

MANUS. That cannot be! She was well and living half an hour ago.

NURSE [*rises*]. Oh, if she could but waken and hear your voice! She died with the fret of losing you; that is heaven's truth! It is tormented she was with these giving out you were done away with, and mocking at your weapons that they laid down to be the cleaver and the spit, till the heart broke in her like a nut.

MANUS [*kneeling beside her*]. Then it is myself have brought the death darkness upon you at the very time I thought to have saved you!

NURSE. There is no blame upon you, but some that had too much talk! [*Goes on keening.*]

MANUS. What call had I to come humbugging and letting on as I did, teasing and tormenting her, and not coming as a

King should that is come to ask for a Queen! Oh, come back for one minute only till I will ask your pardon!

DALL GLIC. She cannot come to you or answer you at all for ever.

MANUS. Then I myself will go follow you and will ask for your forgiveness wherever you are gone, on the Plain of Wonder or in the Many-Colored Land! That is all I can do . . . to go after you and tell you it was no want of respect that brought me in that dress, but hurry and folly and taking my own way. For it is what I have to say to you, that I gave you my heart's love, what I never gave to any other, since first I saw you before me in my sleep! Here, now, is a short road to reach you! [*Takes sword.*]

PRINCE OF MARSHES [*catching his hand*]. Go easy now, go easy.

MANUS. Take off your hand! I say I will die with her!

PRINCE OF MARSHES. That will not raise her up again. But I, now, if I have no skill in killing beasts or men, have maybe the means of bringing her back to life.

NURSE. Oh, my blessing on you! What is it you have at all?

PRINCE OF MARSHES [*taking bag from his Aunt*]. These three leaves from the Tree of Power that grows by the Well of Healing. Here they are now for you, tied with a thread of the wool of the sheep of the Land of Promise. There is power in them to bring one person only back to life.

FIRST AUNT. Give them back to me! You have your own life to think of as well as any other one!

SECOND AUNT. Do not spend and squander that cure on any person but yourself!

PRINCE OF MARSHES [*giving the leaves*]. And if I have given her my love that it is likely I will give to no other woman for ever, indeed and indeed, I would not ask her or wish her to wed with a very frightened man, and that is what I was a while ago. But you yourself have earned her, being brave.

MANUS [*taking leaves*]. I never will forget it to you. You will be a brave man yet.

PRINCE OF MARSHES. Give me in place of it your sword; for I am going my lone through the world for a twelve-month and a day, till I will learn to fight with my own hand.

[*Manus gives him sword. He throws off cloak and outer-coat and fastens it on.*]

NURSE. Stand back, now. Let the whole of ye stand back. [*She lays a leaf on the Princess's mouth and one on each of her hands.*] I call on you by the power of the Seven Belts of the Heavens, of the Twelve Winds of the World, of the Three Waters of the Sea! [*Princess stirs slightly.*]

KING. That is a wonder of wonders! She is stirring!

MANUS. Oh, my share of the world! Are you come back to me?

PRINCESS. It was a hard fight he wrestled with. . . . I thought I heard his voice. . . . Is he come from danger?

NURSE. He did. Here he is. He that saved you and that killed the Dragon, and that let on to be a serving boy, and he no less than one of the world's kings!

MANUS. Here I am, my dear, beside you, to be your comrade and your company for ever.

PRINCESS. You! . . . Yes, it is yourself. Forgive me. I am sorry that I spoke unkindly to you a while ago; I am ashamed that it failed me to know you to be a king.

[*She stands up, helped by Nurse.*]

MANUS. It was my own fault and my folly. What way could you know it? There is nothing to forgive.

PRINCESS. But . . . if I did not recognize you as a king . . . anyway . . . the time you dropped the eggs . . . I was nearly certain that you were no cook! [*They embrace.*]

QUEEN. There now I have everything brought about very well in the finish!

[*A scream at door. Taig rushes in, followed by Sibby, in country-dress. He kneels at the Queen's feet, holding on to her skirt.*]

SIBBY. Bad luck and bad cess to you! Torment and vexa-

tion on you! [*Seizes him by back of neck and shakes him.*] You dirty little scum and leavings! You puny shrimp you! You miserable ninth part of a man!

QUEEN. Is it King or the Dragon-Killer he is letting on to be yet, or do you know what he is at all?

SIBBY. It's myself knows that, and does know it! He being Taig the tailor, my own son and my misfortune, that stole away from me a while ago, bringing with him the grand clothes of that young champion [*Points to Manus.*] and his gold! To borrow a team of horses from the plough he did, and to bring away the magistrate's coach! But I followed him! I came tracking him on the road! Put off now those shoes that are too narrow for you, you red thief, you! For, believe me, you'll go facing home on shank's mare!

TAIG [*whimpering*]. It's a very unkind thing you to go screeching that out before the King, that will maybe strike my head off!

SIBBY. Did ever you know of any one making a quarrel in a whisper? To wed with the King's daughter, you would? To go vanquish the water-worm you would? I'll engage you ran before you went anear him!

TAIG. If I didn't, I'd be tore with his claws and scorched with his fiery breath. It is likely I'd be going home dead!

SIBBY. Strip off now that cloak and that bodycoat and come along with me, or I'll make split marrow of you! What call have you to a suit that is worth more than the whole of the County Mayo? You're tricky and too much tricks in you, and you were born for tricks! It would be right you to be turned into the shape of a limping foxy cat!

TAIG [*weeping as he takes off clothes*]. Sure I thought it no harm to try to go better myself.

PRINCE OF MARSHES [*giving his cloak and coat*]. Here, I bestow these to you. If you were a while ago a tailor among kings, from this out you will be a king among tailors.

SIBBY [*curtseying*]. Well, then, my thousand blessings on you! He'll be as proud as the world of that. Now, Taig,

you'll be as dressed up as the best of them! Come on now to Oughtmana, as it is long till you'll quit it.

[*They go towards door.*]

DRAGON [*putting his head in at window*]. Manus, King of Sorcha, I am starved with the want of food. Give me a bit to eat.

FINTAN. He is not put down! He will devour the whole of us! I'd sooner face a bullet and ten guns!

DRAGON. It is not mannerly to eat without being invited. Is it any harm to ask where will I find a meal will suit me?

PRINCESS. Oh, does he ask to make a meal of me, after all?

DRAGON. I am hungry and dancing with the hunger! It was you, Manus, stopped me from the one meal. Let you set before me another.

KING. There is reason in that. Drive up now for him a bullock from the meadow.

DRAGON. Manus, it is not bullocks I am craving, since the time you changed the heart within me for the heart of a little squirrel of the wood.

MANUS [*taking a cocoa-nut from table*]. Here is a nut from the island of Lanka, that is called Adam's Paradise. Milk there is in it, and a kernel as white as snow.

[*He throws it out. Dragon is heard crunching.*]

DRAGON [*putting head in again*]. More! Give me more of them! Give them out to me by the dozen and by the score!

MANUS. You must go seek them in the east of the world, where you can gather them in bushels on the strand.

DRAGON. So I will go there! I'll make no delay! I give you my word, I'd sooner one of them than to be cracking the skulls of kings' daughters, and the blood running down my jaws. Blood! Ugh! It would disgust me! I'm in dread it would cause vomiting. That and to have the plaits of hair tickling and tormenting my gullet!

PRINCESS [*claps hands*]. That is good hearing, and a great change of heart.

DRAGON. But if it's a tame dragon I am from this out, I'm

thinking it's best for me to make away before you know it, or it's likely ye'll be yoking me to harrow the clods, or to be dragging the water-car from the spring well. So good-bye the whole of ye, and get to your supper. Much good may it do you! I give you my word there is nothing in the universe I despise, only the flesh-eaters of Adam's race!

CURTAIN

THE PLAYS AND THEIR AUTHORS

THE REHEARSAL

NEARLY all of Maurice Baring's "Diminutive Dramas," of which *The Rehearsal* is one, deal humorously with famous characters or incidents in history or in literature. For example, Cæsar's wife Calpurnia, King Alfred, Henry VIII, and Catherine Parr figure in various plays. The author's ingenuity and lively wit make characters whom we expect to be rather unusual appear as quite ordinary people.

The Rehearsal creates an imaginary situation such as might conceivably have inspired Shakespeare's famous lines in *Macbeth* (Act V, Scene v), "To-morrow and to-morrow, and to-morrow . . ."

Mr. John Hampden in editing the volume entitled *Nine Modern Plays* says: "The author has dealt freely with characterization and several other matters. The Globe Theater had no 'wings' in the modern sense; the actors entered by doors on either side of the stage. The 'Producer' and the 'Stage Manager' were not known by those titles.

"Richard Burbage, a friend of Shakespeare's, was the great tragedian who played Richard III, Hamlet, Othello, and other leading rôles. Shakespeare himself is reputed not to have been a very good actor; he played such parts as the Ghost in *Hamlet*, and Adam in *As You Like It*. In Shakespeare's day, women did not appear on the stage. Young men and boys played the female parts.

"The point of the reference to Mistress Mary Fytton, is that after many attempts by critics to identify her with the 'dark lady' of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, it has now been shown that she was fair."

The Honorable Maurice Baring, fourth son of Lord Revel-

stoke, is a graduate of Cambridge University, and the author of nearly fifty volumes of poems, plays, novels, and critical essays. He served six years in the British diplomatic service, and has been a war correspondent in Manchuria, Russia, the Balkans, and in the World War. He eventually became a staff officer in the Royal Flying Corps and was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

A MISTAKE AT THE MANOR

A Mistake at the Manor was first performed at the De Witt Clinton High School of New York City, a school in which both students and teachers have always shown keen interest in dramatics. It is one of five included in a volume called *Short Plays About Famous Authors*, published by Henry Holt and Company. Charles Dickens, Heinrich Heine, Fanny Burney,[1] and Shakespeare are the central figures of the other four.

In all these plays the author has endeavored to give the characters so well known by name, something of reality in the minds of the young people of to-day. As must always be the case with plays of this type, they depart to some extent from the facts of time and place, but such departures are counted forgivable if the portrayals keep faith in spirit with the originals.

A Mistake at the Manor is based on an incident in the early life of Oliver Goldsmith, which is related as follows by Austin Dobson:

"Having set off for school on a borrowed hack and equipped with boundless riches in the shape of a guinea, given him by a friend, he amused himself by viewing the neighboring country seats on the road, intending ultimately to put up like a gentleman at an inn. Night fell, and he found himself at Ardagh, half-way on his journey. Casting about for information as to the best house, that is to say, the best inn in

[1] *Miss Burney at Court* is included in Webber and Webster's *Short Plays for Junior and Senior High Schools.*

the neighborhood, he unluckily hit upon one Cornelius Kelly, who had been fencing-master to the Marquis of Granby, but, what is more to the purpose, a confirmed wag and practical joker. Amused with Oliver's schoolboy swagger, he gravely directed him to the mansion of the local magnate, Squire Featherston. To Squire Featherston the lad accordingly repaired, and called hastily for someone to take his horse. Being ushered into the presence of the supposed landlord and his family, he ordered a good supper, invited the rest to share, treated to a bottle or two of wine, and finally retired to rest, leaving careful instructions that a hot cake should be prepared for his breakfast on the morrow. His host, who was a humorist, and, moreover, knew something of his visitor's father, never undeceived him, and it was not until he quitted the supposed inn the next day that he learned to his confusion that he had been entertained at a private house. Thus early in Oliver Goldsmith's career was rehearsed the first sketch of the successful comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*."

Goldsmith's death (1773) occurred just over a year after the production of *She Stoops to Conquer*, so he had, unfortunately, no opportunity to follow up the success of that play.

THE PRINCE OF COURT PAINTERS

This one-act play in verse offers a dramatic miniature of a notable artist of the eighteenth century. George Romney (1734–1802) was a rival of Sir Joshua Reynolds and of Thomas Gainsborough, and like them painted many portraits of the leaders of English society of that day. Well-known works by Romney are several paintings of Emma, Lady Hamilton, the friend of Lord Nelson, the picture called "The Parson's Daughter," and the portrait of himself. In 1790, he contributed to the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery, in which were assembled representations of many scenes from the great dramatist. An unfriendly critic remarked upon Romney's work in this series, "Romney, before you paint Shakespeare, do, for Heaven's sake, read him!" This man

probably felt that the painter gave too free rein to artistic license, and was perhaps too much influenced by contemporary dress, furniture, and so on.

Constance D'Arcy Mackay's interest in the theater began with the toy stage on which as a child she mounted fairy plays composed by herself and acted with cardboard players. This interest was stimulated by reading Miss Alcott's *Little Women* — in which is the play-acting "Jo" — and by poring over the wonderful costumes in an illustrated edition of Guizot's *History of France*. Years later, at Boston University, Miss Mackay studied dramatic criticism and wrote plays; and these courses have borne rich fruit in her subsequent career as author and producer of plays both short and long. Miss Mackay has written also numerous textbooks and magazine articles, helpful to all students and directors of the drama. In 1923 she married Mr. Roland Holt, himself an authority upon various matters dealing with the theater.

No one has written short plays that are more popular with young people than are those of Miss Mackay; and it is difficult to single out any few from fifty or more as the ones that will best repay reading. *The Beau of Bath*, however, may be commended as one type of her work,[1] and *The House of the Heart*, *The Silver Thread*, *Benjamin Franklin: Journeyman*, and *The Boston Tea Party*, as others.

Regarding her plays in the volume from which *The Prince of Court Painters* is taken the author says:

"All of the plays are of the same period. Therefore, if so desired, three or four of them may be given consecutively with no change of scene by the simple expedient of moving the furniture and having different lighting. Watteau-like screens, a clavier for a harpsichord, the right use of chintz

[1] *The Beau of Bath* is included in Webber and Webster's *One-Act Plays for Secondary Schools*; and *Benjamin Franklin: Journeyman*, and *The Boston Tea Party*, in the same editors' *Short Plays for Junior and Senior High Schools*.

and brocade, firelight, candlelight or moonlight skillfully managed, and the thing is done!

"Little theaters, *théâtres intimes*, and studio stages are constantly showing that atmosphere may be created by the most simple effects, whether for amateur or professional. And surely the atmosphere of no century can be conveyed more easily by a mere touch than that of the eighteenth, with its wits and belles, its powder and patches, its mannered elegance, its brocades and lace."

FRANCES AND FRANCIS

Had Mr. Northern been merely a Broadway *producer*, he would probably have cast his piece throughout according to type, and have found an actor who would look the part of the Earl of Dorincourt without resorting to a wig. But he is an actor-manager, determined himself to play the rôle. He has already gone so far in considering how he should look in the part that he has secured a wig. I fancy he rather enjoys showing off before Frances how completely he can transform himself. Incidentally he interests the spectators who watch from "out front" and gives a greater vividness to the scene in which Frances has her "audition." If, however, an unskilled amateur is likely to have difficulty in making up quickly enough to secure the right effect, it is possible by cutting out a few lines to present Northern as in real life sufficiently like the Earl in appearance as to enable him to play the part convincingly at the audition without further make-up.

This sketch was first performed in a program of one-act plays presented by the Larchwood Players, a sort of graduate or advanced group of the Ruth Fielding Child Players, at the Bungalow Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in November, 1923.

Mr. James Plaisted Webber, a native of Bath, Maine, is a graduate of Bowdoin College, and of Columbia University. For many years he was a teacher at The Phillips Exeter Acad-

emy, first as Instructor in English, and later as Instructor in Oratory and Dramatic Literature. He has recently taken a position in the English Department at Hartwick College, Oneonta, New York.

For several summer seasons, Mr. Webber played in the Stuart Walker Companies in Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Dayton; and during one of his visits to England, he was a member of the company playing at the Old Vic Theater in London. More recently he was with Mr. Walter Hampden's Company in his latest production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Several of Mr. Webber's one-act plays[1] have been published by the Walter H. Baker Company, of Boston; and his three-act comedy, *Falstaff*, based upon scenes from Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *King Henry the Fourth*, and with music by Porter Steele and lyrics by Brian Hooker, was produced in New York during the season of 1928–29 by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Coburn.

AUGUSTUS IN SEARCH OF A FATHER

Harold Chapin, who lost his life while a soldier in the World War, is considered by Mr. William Archer to have been a dramatist of "unquestionable genius." He was born in the United States, in 1886, but was taken to England when two years old. Through most of his short life — he died at twenty-nine — he was connected with the theater. His first appearance, when he was only seven, was in the part of young Marcius, the son of Coriolanus in Shakespeare's tragedy. At the same Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-on-Avon his mother played Volumnia, the mother of Coriolanus. Harold made various other appearances on the stage during his childhood, and in 1902 became an actor in real earnest. When *Augustus in Search of a Father* was first presented (in 1910), the author himself played the part of Augustus. It is interesting to know that the dramatic instinct persists in Chapin's

[1] *The End of the Rainbow* is included in the present editors' *Short Plays for Junior and Senior High Schools.*

family, for his little son at the age of five acted the child's part in *The Philosopher of Butterbiggens* at a performance in memory of the dramatist in London.

At the Glasgow Repertory Theater, in 1911, Harold Chapin produced Brighouse's *Lonesome-Like* and short plays by other authors, including several of his own. Later he became the stage manager of Granville Barker's Shakespearean productions at the Savoy Theater, London, and, through several seasons preceding the outbreak of the World War, played or produced at various other theaters. Meanwhile he was constantly writing his own plays, both short and full length. Probably those that most fully represent Chapin's command of his craft are *It's the Poor as 'elps the Poor*, *The Dumb and the Blind*, *The Autocrat of the Coffee Stalls*, and *Muddle Annie*. Each of these, like *Augustus in Search of a Father*, has a very human appeal and stands among the best and most characteristic one-act plays written for the repertory theaters of England. His longer plays are brilliant and full of promise.

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER

August Friedrich Ferdinand von Kotzebue (1761–1819), the German dramatist, was a contemporary of Romney, the English artist who figures in the play *The Prince of Court Painters*, contained in this book. About 1782, Kotzebue finished his studies and began the practice of the law. Soon he was made secretary to the governor-general of St. Petersburg. These were the days of Catherine the Great and her favorite politician Potemkin: and the favor of these powerful persons led to Kotzebue's rapid advancement. He married the daughter of a lieutenant-general and before the age of twenty-five was made a noble. He was not satisfied with political success and set about making a name in literature. His novels were well received, but he soon found that his real forte was in dramatic composition; and his plays speedily gave him an international reputation. Two of them, *The Strangers* and *Pizarro*, were adapted to the English stage by Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

Kotzebue's brilliance aroused the jealous enmity of his associates, and during the latter part of his life he had many quarrels. For example, following his appointment as dramatist to the Court Theater in Vienna, he immediately had to resign because of difficulties with the actors; and when he returned to his native Weimar, he attacked Goethe, the popular idol, and the whole Romantic School, with the result that he was ostracized by the important literary people. He returned to Russia, where he was arrested, and only the fact that one of his comedies had flattered the Emperor Paul saved him from Siberia. The Emperor made him director of the German Theater in St. Petersburg, but before long the Emperor died suddenly and Kotzebue again suffered from his enemies. The Germans suspected him of being a spy in the service of Russia, and in 1819 a young enthusiast in the new movement for popular liberty assassinated him.

Kotzebue's work includes more than two hundred plays, as well as fiction, history, and an autobiography. His work can hardly be called great, for he is frequently prejudiced, and lacks deep insight and poetic power; yet he had a feeling for the stage that amounted almost to genius. His instinct for effective situations is rarely at fault and students of the drama, as is evidenced by the little play printed here, find that his influence on the technique of dramatic composition and theatrical presentation has persisted through several generations of playwrights. There is a surprising modern flavor in *Pharaoh's Daughter* despite its use of certain devices no longer in favor.

THE THRICE-PROMISED BRIDE

The Thrice-Promised Bride, the author tells us, is based on a folk tale of old China, told in various versions to Chinese children to teach them the lesson of filial fidelity and piety, and to impress them with the justice of their superiors. In the basal incident as it actually occurred, the three candidates were insignificant, unromantic, common folks, who were

brought to the magistrate's court because of their rioting in the streets at the time of the interrupted wedding of "the thrice-promised bride." Mr. Hsiung has translated the incident with a naïveté of imagination, a freshness of phrase and a charming sense of humor which our young American playwrights may well emulate.

His play is an interesting example of contemporary Chinese drama as written by a man well acquainted with the literary traditions and methods of his own country and also with the Western viewpoint.

Mr. Cheng-Chin Hsiung is a native of Nanchang, China. Coming to the United States in 1918, he graduated from the University of Wisconsin and later studied at Cornell and at the University of North Carolina, where he was enrolled in the advanced courses in the drama. He has now returned to China and is carrying on an important part in the making of a new drama in that country.

THE COPPER POT

The Scene. The scene shows the street and sidewalk of an Arab village. The sidewalk and as much of the street as is convenient is customarily used for tethered donkeys and sleeping camels and dogs, and for the stools of the café. People walk in the street.

The houses, which extend along the back in an unbroken block, are of one story, windowless, and of baked mud or stone. The doors of the houses and café are of wood, with heavy iron hinges and bolts. The café doors are double, and the house doors about as high as a man (if the lintel of a door makes one stoop, an enemy is at a disadvantage when he tries to enter).

The interior of the café is dark, lightened by gleams of copper or brass, a charcoal brazier, or a shaft of light on a gorgeous rug. The stools are rough, four-legged affairs,

about a foot high; the benches a little higher, sometimes with a rug thrown over them.

Although the scene is at twilight or early dawn, it is well to emphasize the contrast of the dark coolness of interiors and the intense blackness of shadows, with the stark, bleached, and sunbaked walls and street. The contrast between glaring light and heavy shadow is very characteristic.

During the "short pause" called for by the stage direction near the top of page 111, the curtain should be lowered to indicate the passage of time.

The muezzin's call is often rendered thus:

> "Allah is Almighty; Allah is Almighty.
> There is no god but Allah.
> There is no god but Allah.
> Come ye to prayer! Come ye to salvation!
> Prayer is better than sleep.
> No God is there but Allah."

Costumes. The men wear a long white shirt to below the knees, belted, and with the heavy plain or striped *abbaya* (outer cloak). On their heads they wear the square *keffiyeh* of white cotton, or dark silk folded diagonally and held in place by a heavy double rope around the head. Salameh may wear full trousers, a short jacket, and a gay turban, closely wrapped, instead. Amin should wear a close, immaculate white turban, and should have a long white beard.

Bedouin women dress in dark blue, trailing chemises, with long, wide, and pointed sleeves, and with long bluish and purplish veils bound around their heads: many silver chains, rings, anklets, coins, bracelets, and earrings.

If the colors as a whole seem too somber, the dancing women can wear any clear strong colors, crimson, orange, purple, white, with touches of brilliant green (no large amount of green, which is the sacred color of the Prophet), cerise, black, scarlet, etc. For combinations, study an Oriental rug,

but keep the colors fairly crude and strong, with no delicate shades. The men may also wear black and yellow and red-striped shirts, with daggers and pistols, and long and ancient guns as well as modern rifles.

The whole play may be costumed in Turkish clothes, full trousers, short jacket (European or otherwise), and the red fez. Amin should in any case wear a close white turban.

Pronunciation. *Amin* is pronounced Ameen. The accent in Salameh and in Abdallah (The Slave of God) falls on the second syllable. The same in Jamaleh. The last syllable in the name Rasid is accented. Fat'ma is pronounced Fathma, the *h* scarcely sounded. Hedba and Habsah are accented on the first syllable, and the *u* in Nur is pronounced like the double *o* in "poor." *Marloom* means "certainly"; *semneh* (the *eh* slurred over very lightly, is clarified butter). *Eiwa*, that is, "by Allah," is the equivalent of our "Yes."

The Copper Pot is a familiar folk-tale in the Near East, one of the many stories that have been told in town harems and by Bedouin camp-fires for generations. In form it is typical of most of these tales, falling into two parts, the first drawing sly, anticipatory chuckles, the second a hearty laugh; both parts emphasizing the moral of the tale.

The author of the play, Frances Healey, was born and brought up on a New Hampshire farm. She has lived in France and traveled in other Mediterranean lands. While spending a winter in Jerusalem some years ago, she started with a party for Petra, south of the Dead Sea. This was before the days of automobiles and airplanes in Palestine, and they rode horseback through Moab, following ancient donkey and camel trails by half-forgotten, buried cities. An insurrection of Bedouin tribes against the Turks broke out and Miss Healey's party was captured by the former. They spent a week of uncertainty and danger in the tents, but eventually returned safe to Jerusalem.

Miss Healey now lives in the town where she was born,

interested in her old house, gardening, church work, and books. She is the author of a number of short stories and plays.

SWEETHEARTS

This little play, for over half a century a favorite for amateur production, was first presented at the Prince of Wales Theater, in London, November 7, 1874. Students will be interested to trace certain resemblances between the plots of *Sweethearts*, of the longer play *Milestones*, by Arnold Bennett and Edward Knoblock, and of the one-act play *Followers*,[1] by Harold Brighouse. Various differences in the playwright's methods, also, will be observed.

De Wolf Hopper, in *Once a Clown, Always a Clown*, writes: "Incidental music and the soliloquy were theatrical devices in good standing long after I became an actor. The soliloquy was the actor's self-starter. At the rise of the curtain, one of the characters, usually the faithful old servant, entered, and, talking to himself, dropped the necessary clues to getting the play going. It was brief and effective, but it also was, no one denied, stilted and theatrical. To-day an audience would snicker." The "asides," so characteristic of the drama of an earlier day, are practically never written into contemporary English plays. Playwrights nowadays usually prefer to give their necessary exposition and characterization through ingenious handling of the scene preceding and the scene following what might have been a soliloquy. The "asides" are avoided through pantomime, suggested, in part, at least, by adequate stage directions. Professor Baker, in *Dramatic Technique*, pages 382–90, makes several interesting comments on these modern uses. The "aside," however, though with what some may feel is a more subtle psychological intention, has lately reappeared in Eugene O'Neil's *Strange Interlude*.

William Schwenk Gilbert (1836–1911) will be recognized

[1] Reprinted in Webber and Webster's *One-Act Plays for Secondary Schools*.

as the famous collaborator of Arthur Sullivan in comic operas which took the world by storm — *Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Iolanthe*, *The Mikado*, and many more. These brought both author and composer fame, fortune, and knighthood, and recent revivals have delighted all audiences.

Gilbert was a descendant of that fine Sir Humphrey who planted the first English settlement in North America (on Newfoundland) nearly twenty-five years before Jamestown. He was the son of a novelist. Throughout his early years he was ambitious to win a commission in the British army; but after graduating from the University of London, he turned first to educational work and afterward to the law. Presently he began contributing to a humorous periodical — both his *Bab Ballads* and the accompanying illustrations — and this led to the production of a successful Christmas burlesque and eventually to playwriting. Gilbert's long list of comedies includes *The Palace of Truth*, *Engaged*, and *Pygmalion and Galatea*; and the last-named of these brought him into association with Sullivan. After several trial pieces, pronounced success attended the mature work of the two men.

THE GIBSON UPRIGHT

Mr. Booth Tarkington, in advising the students at The Phillips Exeter Academy regarding the writing of stories, suggested that they always start with character, never with plot. Whether or not Mr. Tarkington himself follows this procedure in writing a play, we do not know. But certainly *The Gibson Upright* offers to the actors an opportunity for many distinct characterizations, ranging from the quiet, self-controlled, but forceful Mr. Gibson to the noisy, turbulent, inefficient Polenski.

This piece, which was first performed by the Stuart Walker Company at the Murat Theater in Indianapolis in the summer of 1919, is eminently suited to amateur production. It is easy to stage; and the characters, simple, though clearly defined, are none of them beyond the conception of imaginative young people.

Even if conditions in American life so change that sooner or later the piece is "dated," it is a creation so human that it should prove interesting both to perform and to witness, for years to come.

Since 1899, when Booth Tarkington was thirty years of age, hardly a year has passed without the appearance of a novel or a play from his pen. During that time Mr. Tarkington has twice won the Pulitzer prize for literature — with *The Magnificent Ambersons* in 1918 and with *Alice Adams* three years later. His first book was *The Gentleman from Indiana*; next, in 1900, came *Monsieur Beaucaire*, which was dramatized the following year; then, among others, *The Man from Home* and *The Gibson Upright* (plays written in collaboration with Harry Leon Wilson), the one-act play *Beauty and the Jacobin*, the stories *Penrod*, and *Seventeen*, numerous novels, and several plays including *Clarence* — in all some forty books of which sixteen are plays. A recent criticism compares Mr. Tarkington's artistic creed with that of William Dean Howells; and it is interesting to know that Howells is regarded by Mr. Tarkington as the greatest literary influence that America has produced. The French writers Daudet, Balzac, and Dumas, the Englishmen Stevenson, Meredith, James, Wells, Bennett, and Hardy, and the Americans Mark Twain and James Whitcomb Riley are others who have inspired Mr. Tarkington's work. "Writing is a trade," he tells us, "and like any other trade it must be learned. We must serve our apprenticeship; but we must work it out alone. There are no teachers. We must learn by failure and by repeated efforts how the thing should be done."

As a boy, Mr. Tarkington attended The Phillips Exeter Academy. His home was in Indiana, and like a loyal son of that State, he began his college education at Purdue University; but he completed it at Princeton. "He filled a prominent place in so many lines of student activity," says an informal biographer, "that we wonder where he found time for

even casual attention to the curriculum. He wrote, he drew, he sang, he composed music, he acted." Later he found his true vocation, and the wide interests and varied talents of his youth bore fruit in the amazing productivity of recent years. Mr. Tarkington's home is in Indianapolis, but he spends the summer months at Kennebunkport, Maine, in what he calls "the house that Penrod built."

Mr. Harry Leon Wilson, a native of Illinois, now lives in Monterey, California. He was for several years the editor of *Puck*, a humorous weekly magazine, of New York, and subsequently began his career in authorship. His first book appeared in 1896, and since then he has published eight or more of which the best known, perhaps, are *His Majesty Bunker Bean*, and *Ruggles of Red Gap*. His wife, Rose O'Neill Latham, is a popular illustrator.

THE DRAGON

Regarding this play, Lady Gregory says:

"I wrote *The Dragon* in 1917, that now seems so many long years away, and I have been trying to remember how I came to write it. I think perhaps through some unseen inevitable kick of the swing towards gay-colored comedy from the shadow of tragedy. It was begun seriously enough, for I see among my scraps of manuscripts that the earliest outline of it is entitled *The Awakening of a Soul*, the soul of the little Princess who had not gone 'far out in the world.' And that idea was never quite lost, for even when it had all turned to comedy I see as an alternative name '*A Change of Heart*.' For even the Dragon's heart is changed by force, as happens in the old folk tales and the heart of some innocent creature put in its place by the conqueror's hand; all change more or less except the Queen. She is yet satisfied that she has moved all things well, and so she must remain till some new breaking up or re-birth.

"As to the framework, that was once to have been the often-told story of a King's daughter given to whatever man

can 'knock three laughs out of her.' As well as I remember the first was to have been when the eggs were broken, and another when she laughed with the joy of happy love. But the third was the stumbling-block. It was necessary the ears of the Abbey audience should be tickled at the same time as those of the Princess, and old-time jests like those of Sir Dinadin of the Round Table seem but dull to ears of to-day. So I called to my help the Dragon that has given his opportunity to so many a hero from Perseus in the Greek Stories to Shawneen in those of Kiltartan. And he did not sulk or fail me, for after one of the first performances the producer wrote: 'I wish you had seen the play last night when a big Northern in the front of the stalls was overcome with helpless laughter, first by Sibby and then by the Dragon. He sat there long after the curtain fell, unable to move and wiping the tears from his eyes; the audience stopped going out and stood and laughed at him.' And even a Dragon may think it a feather in his cap to have made Ulster laugh."

Lady Gregory was born at Roxborough, County Galway, Ireland, in 1859, and in 1881 married Sir William Gregory, who was formerly Governor of Ceylon. Unlike most successful dramatists, she began writing for the stage comparatively late in life, her first play appearing in 1904. Since then she has thrown herself heart and soul into the attempt to express the Celtic soul by comedies, dramas, poems, tales, and collections of folklore. She has a rare perception of those elusive qualities of her people which baffle the Englishmen or any other "foreigners." Her plots frequently turn on some impossible and imaginative theme, for she loves to interweave fantasy and real life.

Lady Gregory knows Irish life, through and through, as few Irishwomen and few Irishmen of our day know it; and in her plays she presents it, particularly village life, with fidelity to human nature, and in the racy dialect of the country. Her plays range from genuine comedies to poignant tragedies, and

include *The Rising of the Moon*, *Hyacinth Halvey*, *The Workhouse Ward*, *The Traveling Man*, and others.[1] These one-act plays were written for the Irish Players, of the Abbey Theater, Dublin, of which Lady Gregory is a director.

[1] *The Rising of the Moon* is included in Webber and Webster's *One-Act Plays for Secondary Schools*, and *The Traveling Man* in the same editors' *Short Plays for Junior and Senior High Schools*.

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